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Kerala: 'Modernizing small-scale fisheries sector crucial'

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/modernizing-small-scale-fisheries-sector-crucial/articleshow/97998266.cms

"A panel discussion on future proofing of small-scale fisheries was held here on Thursday as part of the ongoing international symposium on innovations in fishing technology, organized by the Bay of Bengal programme (BoBP) and other organizations. Experts suggested that blending technological innovations with indigenous traditional knowledge in respective regions could help improve the livelihood of fishermen. "Relevant innovations are crucial to meet a set of targets such as sustaining production in coastal waters, mitigating climate change, developing mariculture, reducing conflict among multiple users of coastal zones, tackling trade barriers and developing value chain," fishery industry officer Food and Agriculture Organisation of John Lansley.

BoBP director P Krishnan said modernizing the small-scale fisheries sector was the need of the hour, to deal with concerns such as low productivity, low price realization and labour issues. The panel discussion proposed ensuring financial covers such as credit and insurance to small-scale fishers. It also suggested taking urgent actions for innovations concerning craft and gear improvisation, hygienic fish handling, economical post-harvest, safety of fishers and easy access to advanced communication and information technologies."

Kerala: Fishermen have walked the green talk, Union joint Union joint secretary

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kerala-fishermen-have-walked-the-green-talk-union-joint-secy/articleshow/98032892.cms

"Local fisher groups in Kerala have set an example by taking efforts to reduce fuel emissions in fishing boats by moving to natural gas, said Sagar Mehra, Union joint secretary, fisheries. Similar initiatives are being adopted in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu by fishermen associations," he said while speaking at a brainstorming session on 'greening the fisheries sector' on the sidelines of the international symposium on innovations in fishing technologies held in Kochi.

He said that the Centre is committed to greening India's marine fisheries sector. "In terms of global greenhouse gas emission, India's fishing sector has a low impact. However, the country will mobilize support to transform the sector and tackle the environmental issues," he added. The session saw experts stating that the sea-level rise was alarming for the sector and technological innovations were needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mehra said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Panchamrit (five promises) aims to increase the

non-fossil energy usage to 500 GW by 2030 and ensure that 50% of the energy requirements come from renewable energy.

Policymakers, experts and senior government officials from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and Thailand besides industry players from across the world attended the brainstorming session. “In order to achieve de-carbonisation in the fisheries sector, the fishing ecosystem as a whole should be taken into account, instead of limiting to fishing fuel,” said Commodore Debesh Lahiri, executive director of the National Maritime Foundation (NMF).

Attended by around 250 participants from 30 countries, the five-day symposium organized by the BOBP-IGO, the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and national fisheries institutions, concluded on Friday."

Kerala: Resemblance between two varieties of ribbon fish turns a ‘catch’ for fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/resemblance-between-two-varieties-of-ribbon-fish-turns-a-catch-for-kerala-fishers/article66525279.ece

"The strong resemblance between two varieties of ribbon fish, locally known as vaala, has landed the trawlers operating off the Kerala coast in a difficult situation. Since it is hard to identify the commercially important large-head hairtail (Trichiurus lepturus) from pearly hairtail (Trichiurus auriga), the catch is often tagged juvenile and seized for violating the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act.

While both belong to the same family, large-head hairtail can grow up to nearly 100 cm long and the species has huge market demand. It is also one among the 58 species for which the State government has set minimum legal size (MLS), prohibiting the capture of undersized fish.

At the same time, pearly hairtail is a small species with a maximum length below 40 cm. “Huge shoals of the species have been entering our nets of late. The fish has no market demand and the only option is to sell it to fish meal fish oil (FMFO) plants. Authorities think we are targeting juveniles, whereas this species cannot grow beyond 30 cm to 35 cm,” says Seban, a fisher.

According to boat operators, the confusion is causing them considerable losses, with the Fisheries department seizing the catch due to the presence of pearly hairtail. “Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) had identified the small ribbon fish variety long ago. According to their study, the stock is abundant. The fish is not edible, but it is not possible to screen it from the by-catch,” says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association.

Since the neighbouring Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have not imposed any restrictions on the capture of pearly hairtail, it is double whammy for Kerala fishers. “As a result, finding crew members for our boats has become hard,” adds Mr. Mathias.

Meanwhile, Fisheries officials say steps have been taken to address the issue. “It is true that they have been bringing huge volumes of Trichiurus auriga bycatch. But a lot of boats are now indulging in juvenile fishing as we are nearing the end of the season. Since it is not a commercially important species, MLS of Trichiurus auriga has not been determined and it is not easy to differentiate between the two varieties, especially in the juvenile stage. But we have already initiated steps to solve the problem and a decision will be taken soon,” says an official."

Kerala: Call to blend innovations with indigenous knowledge to help small-scale fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/call-to-blend-innovations-with-indigenous-knowledge-to-help-small-scale-fishers/article66516972.ece

"Marine scientists and experts from across the globe called for blending technological innovations with indigenous traditional knowledge in respective regions to improve the livelihood of fishermen. They were participating in a panel discussion on future proofing of small-scale fisheries on the sidelines of the ongoing international symposium on innovations in fishing technology in Kochi on Thursday.

On the major challenges in small-scale fisheries, John Lansley, Fishery Industry Officer of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, said culturally appropriate technologies significant to respective regions needed to be developed to enhance the contribution of fishing to food security.

“Relevant innovations are crucial to meet a set of targets such as sustaining production in coastal waters, mitigating climate change, developing mariculture, reducing conflict among multiple users of coastal zones, tackling trade barriers, and developing value chain,” he said. In addition to scientific and technological innovations, effective utilisation of age-old indigenous traditional knowledge existing in different localities as much as possible is important to develop small-scale fisheries and improve the livelihood of traditional fishers, he added.

A press release citing P. Krishnan, Director of the Bay of Bengal Programme - Inter Governmental Organisation (BOBP-IGO) said modernising the small-scale fisheries sector was necessary to deal with concerns such as low productivity, low price realisation, and labour issues. The modern small-scale fisheries sector will take decisions based on traditional knowledge and scientific evidence, helping maximise the value of the catch, he said.

Flagging concern over growing issues such as climate change impacts, overfishing, and scattered input and output market structure, the panel proposed ensuring financial covers such as credit and insurance for small-scale fishers. It also suggested innovations for craft and gear improvisation, hygienic fish handling, economic post-harvest, safety of fishers, and easy access to advanced communication and information technologies, the release said. The meet also demanded that small fishing vessels be fitted with on-board freezing and sorting facilities, a long-pending issue, to boost post-harvest value creation. It is high time small fishing vessels were equipped in a way that helps them venture into the deep sea.

Daniel Stepputtis, scientist of Thunen Institute, Germany, said environmental impacts should be minimised for a sustainable and healthy existence of the sector. Attended by around 250 participants from 30 countries, the symposium is being organised by BOBP-IGO, National Fisheries Development Board, and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research."

Kerala: ₹2,450-cr scheme to rehabilitate fishermen

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/2450-cr-scheme-to-rehabilitate-fishermen-in-kerala/article66490599.ece

"The Kerala government has drawn up a comprehensive scheme of ₹2,450 crore for the rehabilitation of fishermen across the State. The government has already rehabilitated as many as 2,321 families from coastal areas hit by severe coastal erosion triggered by global warming and climate change through the Punargeham scheme.

A total of 21,220 families living within 50 m of the high tide line will be rehabilitated to safer locations. Out of this, 8,675 families have informed their willingness to relocate to safer locations, said Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian. As part of the Punargeham scheme, 390 flats and 1,931 individual houses have been constructed, while 1,184 flats and 1,373 houses are under various stages of construction.

Further, steps have been taken to rehabilitate 400 families at Muttathara in Thiruvananthapuram by constructing a complex of 50 buildings after acquiring 8 acres of land owned by the Dairy Development department. The government plans to hand it over to the beneficiaries in one-and-a-half years after completing the project under the supervision of the Harbour Engineering department.

Each housing unit will have an area of 635 sq ft, including a common utility, two bedrooms, a hall, a kitchen, and toilet facilities. The Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS) is entrusted with the task of construction. Further, those who have informed of their willingness to move to safer locations can either buy land up to 2-3 cents on their own to build a

house or buy land and house together or even identify land in groups and build a flat for which a maximum financial assistance of ₹10 lakh per family will be given, said the Minister.

Besides, flats are being built on government land and private land under the supervision of the Fisheries department, for which a transparent system has been set up with the District Collector as chairman and people's representatives as members to select the beneficiaries, added Mr. Cherian."

Kerala: Marine fish catches climb over 50 per cent, sardine yield nearly doubled

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/marine-fish-catches-climb-over-50-per-cent-in-kerala-sardine-yield-nearly-doubled-1.8295295

"Over 50 per cent increase has been recorded in the availability of marine fish in Kerala in 2021-22 compared to the previous financial year. Nearly 6.01 lakh tonnes of fish was caught from the state's territory in 2021-22. This was only 3.91 lakh tonnes in 2020-21. The state captured 3.08 lakh tonnes of fish in the first two quarters of the financial year 2022-23.

The marine fish catch was more than 5 lakh tonnes from 2000 to 2016. This dropped to 4.8 lakh tonnes in 2016 and 2017. Though an increase was marked in 2018, it again declined drastically in 2019 and 2020. This had urged the union government to seek explanation from the state government and criticisms were raised against violations, including the catch of juvenile fish. The state fisheries department cited harsh weather conditions and the Covid-19-induced lockdown as the cause of the decline in marine fish yield. Due to weather alerts and warnings, the fisherfolk could not pursue fishing for nearly 100 days in these years.

The department said that successful efforts to curb the catch of juvenile fish have resulted in the high yield last year. Up to 60-70 per cent of the marine fish catch in Kerala constitutes surface water fish, including sardines and mackerels. The department considers the steep increase in the yield of sardines as a significant achievement

Nearly 12,340 tonnes of sardines were caught in the state in 2021-22, instead of the 6,762 tonnes caught in 2020-21. When the sardine yield had the biggest decline of the past 20 years in 2019, the researchers had become anxious whether the sardine population was leaving the Kerala coast."

Kerala: Study finds operational cost of LPG-driven fishing vessels less by 66%

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/study-finds-operational-cost-of-lpg-driven-fishing-vessels-less-by-66/article66481072.ece

"A study conducted by the Central Institute of Fisheries, Nautical & Engineering Training (CIFNET) on retrofitting fishing vessels with LPG kits has found that the operating cost of LPG-driven vessels would be around 66% less than traditional kerosene-powered engines.

The gist of the report tabled in the Assembly reveals that a fishing vessel with an outboard motor (OBM) using kerosene requires around 8 litres of kerosene for propelling it for one hour in a day, thus working up to about 1,400 litres a month (when calculated upon seven working hours a day and an average of 25 days a month). Considering the market price of kerosene at ₹124 per litre, the monthly fuel bill would come around ₹1,73,600 for kerosene-driven vessels.

Whereas, LPG-powered vessels require only 3.2 kg of LPG to power them for an hour and require only 560 kg of fuel per month, incurring a monthly fuel bill of ₹58,800 as a kg of LPG costs only ₹105. In short, fishermen can save up to ₹1,14,800 as operating costs when switching to LPG, which is around 66% less than kerosene engines.

K.S. Vinod, senior instructor, marine engineering, CIFNET, said the first test run of the fishing vessel with retrofitted LPG kits of a private firm at Aluva was done in 2006. However, the result was not much promising as the 9.9 HP LPG-powered engine could reduce only up to 10% of the operating costs as the kit was based on vapour off-take technology, which sucks the fuel in the form of vapour from the cylinder. Further, towing power, which is essential for breaking the wave power of the Arabian Sea, was relatively less compared to kerosene engines.

“Later, the company came up with a new kit based on liquid off-take technology, which sucks the fuel in the form of liquid, in 2021 which was quite good as the cost of the operation came down by around 65% for 9.9 HP engines and 66% 25 HP engines with no power loss even during rough sea conditions with maximum load,” said Mr. Vinod.

Subsequently, the report was submitted to the Centre and the State governments. The Centre then gave permission to do a trial run on 1,000 LPG-driven vessels across the country.

Speaking to The Hindu, Fisheries director Adeela Abdulla said in the case of Kerala, test runs have already been done with 10 such boats in Alappuzha and field trials at Vizhinjam. “The results were encouraging. Now, we have asked the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) to submit a report analysing the performance of the field trials before switching to LPG,” said Ms. Abdulla."

Kerala: Increase in fish population reported along Vizhinjam breakwater

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/increase-in-fish-population-reported-

along-vizhinjam-breakwater/article66485376.ece

"The increase in fish population along the 3.1-km breakwater that is under construction for the Vizhinjam International Seaport works has come as a surprise for many. Popular notion is that the construction work will drive away shoals of fish and other marine species from the region due to fluctuations in temperature, salinity and the accumulation of silt and pollutants.

But the underwater cameras mounted on divers employed to check the line and level of breakwater construction, especially for the placement of accropodes, captured images of a thriving marine ecosystem with portions of the breakwater under the water acting as artificial reefs offering suitable habitats for many marine species, including ornamental fishes.
According to experts engaged in the construction of the port, once the dredging works started, the seabed got agitated and the nutrients from the seabed got mixed in the water, attracting fishes. Further, the boulders and accropodes of the breakwater are acting as safe breeding ground for fish. Most of the fishes spotted along the breakwater are ornamental, than edible ones.

M.K. Anil, Principal Scientist, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), told The Hindu that "the structure had been acting like artificial reefs, which are relatively less in our sandy coast compared to the coastal areas from Rameswaram to Kanyakumari. These hard structures attract lobsters and mussels since the structure can offer breeding grounds for several such species, including ornamental fishes, in addition to providing habitat for corals and other invertebrates."

"Though the port work may create some turbidity in the region, it will be for short period. Considering the level of monsoon turbidity along the coast of Kerala, this will not create any major issue for the marine ecosystem. If there would be any issues in the future, it would be from any possible oil spillage from ships. But considering that big ships are expected to called in at the port, the level of oil spillage will be less," added Mr. Anil.

Fisherfolk have been alleging that dredging, reclamation and so on have been polluting the marine ecosystem, leading to a fall in marine biodiversity and decline in fish catch. Meanwhile, the work on 1.6 km of the 3.1-km breakwater has been completed. Also, reclamation of 35 hectares of sea out of the 53 ha required and work on 5.4 ha of container yard out of the total 30 ha have been completed."

India: CMFRI Covid-19 impact study notices change in taste preference among fish consumers in Kerala

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/cmfri-study-notices-change-

in-taste-preference-among-fish-consumers-in-kerala/article66480555.ece

"Though the unavailability of marine fish during Covid-19 forced fish lovers to go for cultured fish, preference for these varieties still remains persistent post-Covid. The taste preference of fish consumers in Kerala has been subjected to change thanks to Covid -19, with the demand for farmed fish like tilapia increasing even after the pandemic period, according to a study conducted by the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).
"Though the unavailability of marine fish during the Covid period forced fish lovers to go for cultured fish, preference for these varieties still remains persistent post- Covid showing a change from the pre-pandemic fish consumption behaviour" the study under a National level research project said.

The market would have all modern facilities for fish marketing, including an open hall and 39 stalls. Tenders for the construction would be floated this month and construction was expected to begin in April, said a release issued by the office of the Minister.
The Minister also directed the officials to speed up the process to complete the work on time. Senior officials from Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, KIIFB, Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC), and other attended the meeting."

Kerala: Over 4,000kg rotten fish seized in city

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/97674475.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

"Kochi: Maradu municipality authorities seized over 4,000kg of rotten fish from two trucks at Vikas Nagar near Kundannoor Bridge on Monday. The registration vehicles were found parked near Kundannoor Bridge. Local people alerted the municipality following foul smell from the trucks. When contingent workers of the municipality opened one of the trucks by breaking the locks, worm-infested fish was found. The drivers of the trucks were not present there. Though the fish in the other truck was not worm-infested, it was rotten.

"Freezer facility was not available in the trucks. The vehicles remained parked on the bypass since Sunday afternoon. The fish was brought for sale here. Local people said that some mini pickup vans transported fish from the trucks in the morning. The drivers of the vehicles have not approached us so far to claim their vehicles," said Maradu municipal chairman Antony Ashanparambil. Fish was found kept in 65 boxes in one of the trucks. Rohu fish species were found in the trucks. Food safety officials have told the municipality that the seized fish were over

two weeks old. Ashanparambil said the trucks have been seized and they will identify the owner of the vehicles and levy the amount spent by the municipality to discard the rotten fish"

Kerala Budget: Fisheries sector gets Rs 321.31 crore

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fisheries-sector-gets-rs-321-31-crore/articleshow/97594681.cms

"Fishermen community in the state is expected to get the much-anticipated shot in the arm, with the finance minister setting apart Rs 321.31 crore for the fisheries sector in the budget. The minister has earmarked Rs 61.1 crore for 'Marine Fisheries' schemes, and Rs 3.5 crore has been allocated for various activities of 'Samudra' project, for developing infrastructure facilities in the fisheries sector. A new scheme with an outlay of Rs 10 crore was also announced to modernize fishing fleets. It is intended to provide a subsidy of 60%, up to a maximum of Rs 10 lakh. In the budget, the government has also declared its intention to promote aquaculture and mariculture. An amount of Rs 82.11 crore has been earmarked for the inland fisheries sector, and Rs 67.50 crore has been allocated with an aim to double the current aquaculture production to 50,000 tonnes. 's seafood industry, which is expecting a huge support from the Centre for the promotion of the industry, will now join shrimp farming in a big way as Rs 5.88 crore has been allocated in the budget for the promotion of Vannamei Shrimp farming.

An amount of Rs 5 crore has been set apart for innovative aquaculture activities and the expansion of Shrimp farming in Kaipadu, Kole and Pokkali fields. However, the traditional fishermen's union expressed disappointment over the budget allocation, which they felt was for fish farmers not part of the fishermen community. According to Charles George, state president of Kerala Matsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi, one of the main issues the fishermen face is the auction pricing at harbours and landing centres."

Kerala: Fishing fleet to be modernised in phases, says policy address

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishing-fleet-to-be-modernised-in-phases-says-policy-address/article66424637.ece

"The policy address delivered by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Monday emphasised that fisheries continues to be a high-priority sector for the State government.

One of the major focus areas of the Fisheries department is modernisation of the ‘fishing fleet’ of the State in a phased manner. The State government has also prioritised projects to provide safe dwellings to fishermen by rehabilitating those living in erosion-prone areas.

Through the flagship programme ‘Punargeham’, 1,473 individual houses and 390 flats have been

completed and handed over to the beneficiaries. Under new projects, the department will take up construction of 660 flats at a cost of 120.63 crores at Muttathara in Thiruvananthapuram, Koyiladi in Kasargod, Unniyal and Ponnani in Malappuram, Mr. Khan said in the address.

The department will continue to provide insurance coverage to fishermen and the fishing implements of traditional fishermen. The department will also strengthen efforts to promote aquaculture activities through diversification of species, adoption of innovative technologies and area expansion. The Harbour Engineering department will also continue its activities for modernisation of fisheries infrastructures, fishing harbours and fish markets, Mr. Khan said.

The government will also continue works related to strengthening vulnerable coastal stretches leveraging innovative technologies like geotubes, tetrapods, diaphragm walls, etc. Ten coastal areas prone to sea erosion have also been identified as 'hot spots,' he said in the address."

Kerala: Government to ensure insurance coverage to all fisherfolk

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/government-to-ensure-insurance-coverage-to-all-fisherfolk-saji-cherian/article66420806.ece

"The State government will ensure insurance coverage for all fisherfolk in the State, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. He was inaugurating the distribution of LPG kits to fishers at a function held on Omanapuzha beach on Sunday. LPG conversion kits were given as part of a scheme to convert fossil fuel-run fishing boats into LPG-driven vessels.

Mr. Cherian said that insurance was mandatory for all fishers venturing into the sea. "The government is responsible for the safety of fishers. Ninety percent of the insurance premium of the fisherfolk is paid by the government," the Minister said, adding that the government was contemplating acting against those vessels going to sea without insurance coverage. Mr. Cherian said that meetings in the presence of people's representatives would be convened in coastal areas of the State in April and May to address issues pertaining to the fishing community. "Members of the fishing community can submit their complaints to the government through a designated portal. The issues will be resolved in the presence of people's representatives at the meetings. In the initial phase, some 50 meetings will be convened across the State," he said.

The Minister said the government was providing compensation of ₹5 lakh to fishers for accidents

in the sea. “The government will compensate fishers for lost working days due to inclement weather warning at the rate of ₹200 per working day. As many as 1.65 fisherfolks will soon get ₹3,000 each for working days lost last year. A sum of ₹50 crore will be sanctioned from the Chief Minister’s Distress Relief Fund for distributing the compensation,” he said.

Mr. Cherian said that LPG kits were introduced on a pilot basis and if found successful, the scheme would be extended to the entire State. Shifting to LPG from kerosene could reduce the expense by 60%. P.P. Chitharanjan, MLA, presided. Alappuzha district panchayat president K.G. Rajeshwari, Fisheries principal secretary K.S. Sreenivas, Director of Fisheries Adeela Abdulla, Mararikulam South grama panchayat president P.P. Sangeetha, and others attended the function."

Karnataka: UCSL, Kerala Fisheries department and self-help groups sign ₹14-crore pact for advanced vessels

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/ucsl-kerala-fisheries-department-and-self-help-groups-sign-14-crore-pact-for-advanced-vessels/article66408814.ece

"Udupi Cochin Shipyard Limited (UCSL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cochin Shipyard Limited, the Kerala Department of Fisheries, and five fishermen’s self-help group societies have signed a tripartite agreement for construction of 10 deep-sea tuna long liner-cum-gill net vessels. The order was valued at around ₹14 crore, said a communication here.

Fisheries Director Adeela Abdulla, UCSL CEO Harikumar A. A., and five fishermen belonging to the self-help groups signed the agreement at an event held at Cochin Shipyard on Thursday.

The vessels are designed as per standard design for deep sea fishing for Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. The vessels will be equipped with advanced navigation and communication systems, including GPS, Automatic Identification System, distress alert transmitter, fish finder, and magnetic compass. The vessel is of 22.7-m length and 6.4-m breadth. The vessel can achieve a maximum speed of eight knots while it has a capacity to carry 12 persons.

The vessels will be equipped with fishing gear such as long liner winch and gillnet hauler. The vessels were built to provide safe and sturdy vessels in the water to enhance productivity, safety and livelihood of the fishermen community, according to the communication."

Kerala: Government allots Rs 50 crore assistance to fishermen

https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/law-order/2324486-kerala-govt-allots-rs-50-crore-assistance-to-fishermen

"The Kerala government on Thursday allocated Rs 50 crore as financial assistance to the fisherfolk families which lost working days due to inclement weather warning. A cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, took a decision to sanction Rs 50.027 crore from the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund (CMDRF) for the families who had lost jobs due to the warning about cyclones, Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan said here. Fishermen had lost 15 working days in the months of April, May, July and August last year due to inclement weather warning, he said.

As many as 1,66,756 fishermen and allied families would get Rs 3,000 each at the rate of Rs 200 per working day, the minister said in a statement. Similar financial assistance had been granted to the fishermen community by the state government earlier during the time of cyclone Tauktae, he added."

Kerala: Low coastal catch is forcing small fisherfolk to go into the deeper, riskier waters of Arabian Sea

https://scroll.in/article/1042053/low-coastal-catch-is-forcing-small-fisherfolk-to-go-into-the-deeper-riskier-waters-of-arabian-sea

"Davidson Anthony Adima started fishing as a 12-year-old, in the coastal waters of southwestern India, on a traditional log raft called kattumaram, propelled by sails and oars. Three decades later, outboard motors take his small fibreglass boat to deeper waters, but he finds fishing as uncertain as the state of the sea, sky and seasons. His trips are becoming longer, costlier and often riskier than before.

Davidson and colleagues from his Fathimapuram village launch and land about 50 small boats (under 34 feet in length) from the sandy shores of the Arabian Sea at the adjoining St Andrew's village in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. A few local boats and shore seine units of fishers from villages further away, where the coast has eroded, find space on this rare scenic beach, along with joggers and walkers.

They fish within 35 km from the shore but sometimes go further to deeper waters, about 100 km from the shore, where bigger mechanised boats operate. Davidson's three outboard engines of 40, 15 and 8 horsepower can handle the distance, the big motor kept in reserve to cut across big waves and escape from foul weather quickly. He navigates with a Global Positioning System, and some colleagues use radio sets and fish-finders (a device to locate fish in water). Fishers are

often forced to invest in technology, even with high-interest private loans, to ensure safety and viability in a changed environment and climate.

Still, unexpected changes in the local climate, increasing fleet size, small catch, increasing fuel prices, uncertainties and market dynamics add up to make the whole operation uncertain and risk-prone.

“Earlier the sea would be calm like a cradle at this time. It would softly caress you,” Davidson said, describing the state of the from November to February. Following the southwestern monsoon season of June to September marked by high wind and waves, the thelivu nalukal (clear days in Malayalam) come as a relief to fishers. “Sometimes, when the sea is very clear, we can see deep down, as far as it is visible, but then we don’t get fish close to the shore during the day,” he said. Fishers chase fish that swim with the currents to faraway seas, he added.

The shallow waters adjoining the 78 km coast of Thiruvananthapuram is known for rocky or sandy reefs and shipwrecks forming rich fish habitats. “Fish used to stay in these places for days like buses in a bus stand,” Davidson said. “The regular ‘customers’ were kalava (grouper), chemeen (snapper), motha (black king fish), oolappu (barracuda) and other fish, but they have just vanished from these places now. Some fish such as thedu (catfish) and panjukadiyan (Indian halibut) have disappeared altogether.”

A 2021 study on the loss of marine fish stock in south west India, noted the disappearance of once popular local fish like navara (mullet), chennavara (red mullet), soles, numb fish, and torpedo ray. Scientists have also noticed fluctuations in abundance of oil sardine due to overfishing, variations in its habitat ecology and ocean warming. Additionally, they have noted an abundance of jellyfish that eat fish larvae in the warm waters.

Pollution is also an increasing issue. Plastic debris and ghost nets abandoned by fishers entangle and choke fish and damage reefs when pulled by strong currents, noted conservationists involved in cleaning up of the coastal waters here. “Discarded nets cover many reefs, and fish avoid these places, scared,” Davidson said. A recent clean-up drive on the tourist beach of Veli near Thiruvananthapuram city yielded 2500 plastic pieces, 90 kg sandals, 319 glass bottles, 32 kg thermocol, 2 kg paper and 10 kg other waste, reports environmental non-governmental organisation Thanal. “Ocean trash is a serious pollution problem that affects the health of the people, marine wildlife and local economies,” a Thanal spokesperson noted.

Fishers also complain that trawling boats from neighbouring districts fish very close to the shore, often on Saturdays when most local fishers are on holiday. Then there is the prevalent practice of fishing juvenile fish.

“Global climate change has brought about changes on the coast of Kerala,” said A Bijukumar, professor and head of the department at the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram. “Because of increasing temperature in the sea, there have been changes in ocean resources as well as natural hazards, significantly impacting fishers’ lives and livelihoods.”

But climate is not the sole reason for local changes. For instance, there have been changes in the availability of many surface-water fish that are usually abundant in the sea here. “Reduction of oxygen in the Indian ocean and excessive catch involving small fish have been pointed out as reasons behind these changes,” Bijukumar said. Eutrophication caused by nutrients from the coast is yet another problem, he pointed out. Decreasing concentrations of dissolved oxygen makes parts of the Arabian sea near Kerala an oxygen minimum zone. Poorly planned coastal structures such as ports and harbours can kill fish habitats and make fishing riskier, studies show.

The most severe threat to the fishers comes from changing storm patterns of the Arabian Sea, historically considered safer than the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side of India. The warming of the Arabian Sea contributes to the formation of highly intense tropical cyclones. A 2021 study on tropical cyclones over the north Indian ocean has shown a significant rise in the intensity, frequency, and duration of cyclonic storms (wind over 62 kmph) and very severe cyclonic storms (winds over 112 kmph). In 2017, for instance, Cyclone Ockhi, formed in the southwestern Bay of Bengal, traversed 2500 km and rapidly intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm near the coast of South India, killing 365 fishers caught in the sea. Climate change is expected to increase the risk of cyclones here.

Engaged in one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, fishermen face frequent accidents, mostly related to weather, but also due to hits with other vessels and dangerous harbour structures. In the past five years, 345 fishermen have died in the sea off the shores of Kerala, including 145 in Thiruvananthapuram, according to a media report. This list does not include 91 fishers who went missing during Ockhi.

At least 643 accidents involving fishing boats were recorded in Kollam, Thiruvananthapuram and Kanyakumari districts during 2011-2016, and 75% of them involved small, motorised boats. The accident causes included high waves while launching and landing, capsizing, getting thrown overboard and damage to gear when hit by another vessel. An international study shows that in developing countries, fishing accidents occur due to lack of enforceable regulation, small, unseaworthy and dangerous vessels, lack of visibility of small boats, lack of weather information, and the compulsion to fish regardless of weather conditions. Unscientific coastal structures further add to the risk of fishing, experts note.

The harbours that the fishers use instead of local sandy beaches during high shore waves are also turning out to be dangerous spots. In September, four people died when their boat capsized close to a harbour, 10 km north of St Andrews, a spot of several accidents. The coastal waters near Vizhinjam harbour, 27 km to the south, is another risk-prone zone. Two boats engaged in seine fishing were caught in unusual high waves also in September. Sahayaraju Susa Michael in his early 50s, one of the 11 fishermen who survived the accident, said they were caught in unexpected high wind and waves. “Suddenly the wind became ferocious,” he said. The boat in which he was fishing capsized and the five crew members were thrown overboard. “We swam, thinking that if we can live, we will live, or we will die. We swam and swam and we hollered loud.” They were joined by three men from the other boat. “The eight of us swam for an hour and a half. A boat heard our call and rescued us…they had to lift us as our hands and legs were frozen.”

Sahayaraju stopped solo raft fishing close to the shore about three years ago as it was not remunerative enough, and he was getting older. His son, Kumar Sahayaraju, a marine biologist and indigenous scientist, said several reef fish species were declining over the past five to ten years, so it is hard for small craft fishers. “There is no fish close to the shore, and the competition is more. It is like the survival of the fittest now. Rafts don’t stand a chance in this competition,” he said.

Diversification to offshore fishing is a solution, according to a 2020 study led by Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. KK Baiju, a co-author based at the Advanced Centre for Atmospheric Radar Research, Cochin University of Science and Technology, said artisanal fishers need to embrace new technologies, use bigger vessels and venture into deeper waters. “They need adequate training and safety measures and ensure that the fishing is both sustainable and economically viable,” he said. Safety gadgets and reliable weather communication systems are essential, he added. There are takers for this view, and there is a Kerala government move to train and equip groups of fishermen for deep sea fishing.

Coastal fishers gamble in deep sea fishing for the rare bumper catch, Kumar Sahayaraju said. However, a safer and more sustainable alternative for small craft fishers could be mariculture (cultivation of fish and other sea life) and restoration of coastal ecosystems. Local fishers are not experienced in these options, and there is no comprehensive data on local biodiversity, he points out. As he noted in the International Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Studies paper he co-authored: “Accurate studies and conservation measures (Marine Biodiversity register and auditing, marine-protected areas,…marine spatial planning) are needed.” This definitely needs a bottom-up ecosystem planning approach, he commented."

Kerala: Release arrears of funds under welfare scheme for fishermen now

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/release-arrears-of-funds-under-welfare-scheme-for-fishermen-now-centre-told/article66381590.ece

"Kerala has asked the Centre to urgently release to it the outstanding amount of around ₹63 crore from previous financial years under a welfare scheme meant for fishermen, the State government said on Sunday. The government has also asked the Centre to release over ₹26 crore under the scheme for the financial year 2022-23, said a statement from the office of Kerala Minister of Fisheries, Culture and Youth Affairs.

It said Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan has also shot off a letter to Union Fisheries Minister Parshottam Rupala seeking release of the funds immediately. In his letter, Mr. Cheriyan said that under the Savings-Cum-Relief Scheme, the Central government has contributed 50 per cent of the funds since 1992, with the remaining half being borne by the State.

However, an amount of around ₹63 crore is pending release from the Centre as arrears of its contribution under the scheme for the period from 2018-19 to 2021-22, he said. Considering the need of releasing the assistance to the beneficiaries in a time-bound manner during the lean period, the entire amount to be disbursed under the scheme was fully borne by the State in the previous financial years anticipating the Centre's contribution, the Kerala Minister said in the letter.

In the financial year 2022-23, the beneficiary contribution of around ₹26 crore collected from around 1.84 lakh beneficiaries was distributed among them, during the lean season, along with the State's contribution under the scheme in two instalments, the letter said. However, the third instalment which was to be disbursed in August 2022 could not be distributed due to non-receipt of the Centre's contribution under the scheme, it said.

""As a huge amount of Central share of previous years under the scheme is pending, the State Finance Department is unable to advance the Central share during the year. ""As the fishermen community is going through some difficult times, I request your personal intervention in the

matter for the release of ₹26.3625 crore being the Central share for 2022-23. Early and favourable action is solicited,"" Mr. Cheriyan said.

He further said the scheme is the only one in place for supporting fishermen during the lean season. Due to the non-release of the third instalment, the fishermen are reluctant to enrol in the current year's scheme as a token of protest, Mr. Cheriyan said and urged the Centre to reimburse it the arrears amounting to ₹63 crore as well as the current financial year's Central contribution."

Kerala: New apartment complex for fisherfolks in Thiruvananthapuram

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/new-apartment-complex-for-fisherfolks-tender-invited/articleshow/96779411.cms

"The third and the biggest apartment complex so far in the district under Punargeham housing scheme will be implemented at an estimated cost of Rs 81 crores. The harbour engineering department has invited tenders from accredited agencies for the 2BHK apartment project. About 400 flats spread over an area of 20,520 sqm will come up for the fishermen community on an eight acre land at Muttathara. The officials said that apart from the seven acres where housing units will be constructed, common amenities will be ensured on the remaining one acre of land.

The fisheries department which implements the Punargeham housing scheme had earlier completed construction of 128 flats at Karode and 20 flats at Beemapally under the scheme. In the new apartment complex coming up at Muttathara, 102 fishermen families who currently live in a godown at Valiyathura will be accommodated. Out of these, two families have constructed individual houses. About 182 families have been identified as living in rented houses or with relatives. One of the families has purchased a house. Remaining families will be allotted flats at the upcoming apartment complex at Muttathara, officials with fisheries department said.

The government had earlier issued an order transferring eight acres of land under the dairy development department to fisheries department for the purpose of construction of an apartment complex. 'Punargeham' housing scheme which aims to rehabilitate families residing within 50 metres of high tide zone will be beneficial to 423 families in the district. The fund is being met using the chief minister's disaster response fund and budget allocation from the department of fisheries.

Each family will receive Rs 10 lakhs as part of the scheme. An amount of Rs 6 lakhs can be spent for purchasing land and Rs 4 lakhs shall be spent for construction of the house if the beneficiary purchases land for construction of the house. If Rs 6 lakhs is not spent on purchase of land, that amount can be used for construction. As per the scheme two cents have been allotted in city limits and three cents have been allotted in rural limits. The cost of land will be directly

credited to the beneficiary account.

The amount required for house construction will be transferred to the beneficiary account in three instalments. The families residing in Anchuthengu, Valiyathura, Chirayinkeezhu and Poovar which are highly prone to tidal attacks are the major beneficiaries of this project. The state government plans to rehabilitate a total 18,685 families across the state as part of the project. The beneficiary list is approved by the district level approval committee headed by district collector."

Kerala: Traditional fishers will now tap deep sea's riches as boats' 'co-owners'

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/traditional-fishers-will-now-tap-deep-seas-riches-as-boats-co-owners/article66324260.ece

"For Ignatius, a third generation fisher from Muthalapozhi with more than three decades of experience, the new year will be bringing a sea change. For the first time in his life, the 54-year-old will be venturing into the sea not as a mere crew member, but a 'co-owner'. One of the beneficiaries of Fisheries department's deep-sea fishing project, Ignatius feels the initiative can save traditional fishers from the exploitation of 'tharakans' (middlemen) and improve the living standards of his community.

With coastal waters running out of resources and the lean season setting in, he is looking forward to the prospect of long fishing expeditions in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that extends to 200 nautical miles. "While huge crafts had been exploiting the marine wealth in EEZ for long, we have been fighting over the sparse catch in territorial waters. Till now traditional workers could go to the deep sea only as labourers," he says.

A total of 10 deep-sea fishing vessels, each costing around ₹1.5 crore, will be launched as part of the project jointly implemented by the State and Union governments. The boats will be handed over to 10-member groups from various fishermen co-operatives affiliated to Matsyafed and the first five units will venture into the sea in January 2023. "One of the objectives is to revive the fisher co-operatives by helping them to create assets.

Right now only private boats are engaged in deep-sea fishing and the government is providing around ₹80-lakh subsidy and ₹70-lakh loan for each vessel. The vessels were built at the Udupi yard of the Cochin Shipyard Ltd. (CSL) with all specifications, including vast storage space. The idea is to develop the sector into a major industry that offers more working days and income," says Fisheries Director Adeela Abdulla.

Since most traditional fishers are not used to month-long fishing expeditions, they were trained in all aspects, including the use of proper gear. Fisher societies from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Kozhikode and Malappuram have been selected for the pilot project while other coastal districts will be considered in the next phases.

“Our boats are not equipped to venture deep or remain in fishing fields for long periods. Traditional fishers, who are trained in techniques like longlining, are the beneficiaries of the project. At present there is no criteria for fixing the wage of crew members and the fishers are often exploited. But these vessels will help the fishers earn at least ₹50,000 a month,” says Lazar, the president of the fisher co-operative from Thiruvananthapuram."

Kerala: Modernisation of Cochin fishing harbour to be completed by December 2023

"Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Fisheries L. Murugan said here on Tuesday that the modernisation of the Cochin Fishing Harbour at Thoppumpady would be completed by December 2023. He was speaking after visiting the harbour where works have already begun. The harbour modernisation project was announced in the last Union Budget, which envisioned modernisation of not only the Cochin harbour but also harbours in Chennai, Visakhapatnam, and Paradeep. Mr. Murugan said the tendering process for the project, which was being jointly funded by the Ministries of Shipping and Ports and Fisheries, had been completed.

The Minister said the Cochin Port Authority (CPA) would also play a major role in the implementation of the project. “We are opting for the public-private partnership [PPP] model too, and a total of ₹169 crore will be invested,” he added. The government is aiming at a complete makeover of the harbour. The focus is on developing basic infrastructure to international standards, expanding landing centres, and modernising post-harvest facilities, including harbours, fish markets, cold storages and ice plants, to ensure high standards in terms of hygiene.

The modernised harbour will also have dormitories, restaurants, and medical facilities. The Minister said the work would be undertaken after taking stakeholders’ views too. Hibi Eden, MP, who had accompanied the Minister, said the modernisation of the harbour would be a great asset to the growing seafood business in the country. He said facilities such as airconditioned auction hall would be the first of its kind in the country.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, a sum of ₹20,000 crore was allocated in the budget for the fisheries sector. While the pandemic affected the entire world, exports in the fisheries sector had increased 32% in the country, and India ranked second in aquaculture exports, the Minister said. K.J. Maxi, MLA, and CPA officials, including chairperson M. Beena,

were among those who accompanied the Minister to the harbour. Mr. Murugan earlier held a meeting at the Cochin Port office to review the progress of the project."

Kerala: Central support for fish landing centres, infrastructure development

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/central-support-for-fish-landing-centres-infrastructure-development-says-minister/article66324654.ece

"Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting and Fisheries L. Murugan said here on Saturday that the Centre had provided ₹20,000 crore for fisheries-related development in the country, including development of fish landing centres and inland fisheries. The Minister is in the State on a six-day visit. A total of ₹7,500 crore has been allotted for developing fishing harbours and landing centres under the Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund, said a communication from the Press Information Bureau citing the Minister here.

He also said that there would be no compromise on any activities, including those on social media that went against the sovereignty and unity of the country. Over the past six months, action has been taken against around 300 YouTube channels and Facebook accounts, the Minister informed.

Mr. Murugan also interacted with directors and scientists at the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering Training (CIFNET), Kochi, which is a Central government entity working under the Fisheries department, the communication added. The Minister also released publications by the CIFNET faculty for fishermen. He will visit the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Kottayam on January 2. On the following day, he will visit the Cochin Fisheries Harbour."

Kerala: Why activism is a way of life for fishing communities

https://lifestyle.livemint.com/news/opinion/why-activism-is-a-way-of-life-for-kerala-s-fishing-communities-111672283951499.html

"Kerala’s coastline is a narrow one with more than 2,000 people crammed into every square kilometre of its shore. Most of those living along this beautiful coast are the fisherfolk whose livelihoods are linked to the sea. Exactly a month ago, members of the fishing community clashed with police after their three-month protest against the construction of an international port at Vizhinjam, near Thiruvananthapuram. Work has now resumed at the port, but the incident is another in a long line of activism undertaken by Kerala’s fishing community to protect their domain against changes that have adversely impacted their lives and changed the nature of their work. Traditional fishing communities have a deep knowledge of the sea and its creatures, understanding that overfishing and coastal erosion will irrevocably change their world.

In the late 1970s, when trawlers began emptying the seas of fish, the community realised they had to organize and assert themselves to protect their domain. Backing them, was the Latin Catholic church to which nearly 40% of the fisherfolk of south Kerala belong. The church had been their rallying point since the Portuguese missionaries began working among them in the 16th century. Now, a new wave of young priests and nuns emerged, whose religious training course had exposed them to ideas like Liberation Theology, or the interpretation of religion as a social and political movement to liberate the oppressed. Alongside, non-profit organisations such as Project for Community Organization (PCO) began working within the fishing community. Among PCO's project was an effort to get them out of the grip of money lenders by converting funds collected for a new church building into a community savings scheme.

In the early 1980s, when the agitation against trawler fishing was at its peak, I spoke several times to Father Thomas Kochery, the leader of a group of Liberation Theologists and a man who would go on to lead the demands for the rights of traditional fishing communities for three decades. To the Liberation Theologists, the western idea of religion as charity did not appeal as much as the concept of joining hands with the poor to fight for their rights. Father Kochery, who had been dubbed Naxal Achan or naxal priest, sat in a tiny office belonging to PCO in Thiruvananthapuram. Was he a Marxist, I asked during one of our conversations as the then Congress government kept calling him that. He laughed and said if standing up for the poor and disempowered made him Marxist then he was one. When the Communists were in power they called him a CIA agent, he laughed.

I spent hours and days meeting the clergy, the social workers and the fisherfolk. I went at dawn to the coast to watch the fish being brought in and the auctioning process. I heard their stories of how they had empowered themselves and visited their villages. They were all inspiring stories which showed again and again that empowerment had to come from within. They needed leaders like Father Kochery to help them in their fight for survival. Over the next ten years they expanded their scope. It was no longer just about fishing rights but also about preserving marine ecology. Father Kochery passed away about eight years ago, but now, nearly forty years later, I see some of those young social workers and activists still alongside the fisherfolk. The recent protest at Vizhinjam proves that seeds of this awareness of their rights to defend their territory were sown more than forty years ago.

One of their major demands is to halt construction of the deep-water port and container transhipment terminal at Vizhinjam. The project which is estimated to cost Rs. 7,525 crore is already more than half complete. The government has agreed to most of their demands, including rehabilitation of families who lost their homes to sea erosion and financial assistance and compensation to families who lost their kin in accidents or weather-related calamities, but it has

refused to budge on halting construction. The fisherfolk say they want to protect their coastline. A recent report from the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) found that about 41% of Kerala's coastline of Kerala has been subjected to varying degrees of erosion between 1990 and 2018. Apart from climate change and rising sea water levels, human intervention in the form of development projects have also contributed to this erosion.

Last month, the protests turned violent and several protestors including some church leaders were arrested. The Latin Catholic Church to which most of the fishermen belong then decided to call a halt to the protests with immediate effect. A.J. Vijayan, chairperson of the Western Ghats and Coastal Protection Forum has said that all "the burning issues raised by the fishing community remain unaddressed", while adding that he will continue to protest. The fight of the fishing communities against the interests of the rich and politically powerful seems unlikely to end soon."

Kerala: More high-tech fish markets will be built

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/more-high-tech-fish-markets-will-be-built-minister/article66285799.ece

"The fish marketing network will be strengthened by upgrading the current infrastructure with timely additions, Finance Minister K.N. Balagopal has said. He was laying the foundation stone for the modern fish market and commercial complex to be built at Nedumankavu recently.

The high-tech market and commercial complex will be constructed spending ₹5.02 crore and the three-storeyed building will have an area of 12,304.675 square feet in two blocks. There will be 12 shops on the ground floor of the first block while three office rooms will function on the first floor. A conference hall that can accommodate 250 people and an office room will come up on the second floor.

The second block will have a fish market, cellar system for storing fish and other products, preparation room and godown for value-added products and chill room. "More modern fish markets and commercial complexes will be built to expand the fish marketing network," said the Minister. Additional facilities like drainage system, toilets, compound wall, gate, electrification, sewage treatment plant, retaining wall, parking arrangements and water tanks will also be part of the project.

Kareepra grama panchayat president P.S Prasobha presided over the function. District panchayat president Sam K. Daniel, vice president Sumalal, district panchayat member Priji Sasidharan, Kottarakkara block panchayat president M. Sivaprasad and Kerala State Coastal Area

Development Corporation Managing Director P.I. Sheikh Pareeth were also present."

Kerala: Notice to Vizhinjam fishers against pleasure trips on boats sparks protest

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/notice-to-vizhinjam-fishers-against-pleasure-trips-on-boats-sparks-protest/article66298582.ece

"A notice issued by the fisheries station, Vizhinjam, asking fishers to refrain from taking their families out to sea on fishing boats during Christmas and New Year celebrations has sparked protests. The notice issued by the Assistant Director of Fisheries, Vizhinjam, observed that these boats are not meant to be used for purposes other than fishing. That being the case, such pleasure trips should be strictly avoided, it said.

Apparently, it is common practice during the festival season for fishers in Thiruvananthapuram district to organise such boat trips. Fr. Eugene Pereira, Vicar General of the Latin Archdiocese of Thiruvananthapuram, termed the decision unilateral and ill-intentioned. The fishing community was not consulted on the matter, he said. ‘’No such orders have been issued in the previous years,’‘ he said.

Reportedly, safety concerns had prompted the Vizhinjam station to issue the notice as a fatal accident had occurred two years ago during such a trip. However, Minister for Transport Antony Raju claimed that the notice was intended as a safety warning. No ‘‘forceful’‘ ban has been imposed on anyone, he told reporters here.

Thiruvananthapuram district is on yellow alert for isolated heavy rainfall on December 26, Monday. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that squally weather with wind speeds touching 45-55 kmph and gusting to 65 kmph is likely along off Tamil Nadu coast, Comorin area and Gulf of Mannar and the Sri Lanka coast till Sunday. Squally weather with wind speeds reaching 40-50 kmph and gusting to 60 kmph is likely to prevail over Kerala coast on December 27."

Kerala: Fishing boats break loose, recovered from shipping channel off Vypeen coast

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishing-boats-break-lose-recovered-from-shipping-channel-off-vypeen-coast/article66284757.ece

"A score of traditional fishing boats moored at the Kalamukku Vallakkadavu fish landing centre broke loose on Tuesday morning leaving fishermen and police personnel scrambling to recover the vessels to avoid a grave and dangerous situation. Fishermen claimed that 20 boats broke loose from the stakes to which they were tied at the fish landing centre in the sturdy flow

of low tide water. The boats that broke loose ended up near the shipping channel, close to the natural gas receiving terminal off the Vypeen coast.

P.V. Jayan, a traditional fisherman, said it was a dangerous situation because the fishing boats had floated close to the shipping channel where it could have led to collisions. He added that 20 fishing boats, most of them big ones with inboard engines, were among those that broke loose. He said some boats sustained damage. But there was substantial damage to stakes in the backwaters off the Vypeen coast, deployed by traditional fishermen who use the stakes as stays for their traditional nets.

Mr. Jayan said the owners of the boats that broke loose would not be liable to pay compensation for the stakes that were damaged because the boat owners had been demanding a safer haven for fishing vessels that use the landing centre, which is owned and operated by a private party.

There are around 70 big fishing boats with inboard engines that use the fish landing centre. There are an equal number of smaller boats, which use outboard engines. They include small fibre boats. It has been the demand of fishermen using the fish landing centre to have better facilities to moor the boats because the flow of water during the tides is strong and boats are often affected.

Traditional fishermen represented by the Kerala Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali Samithi said the Fisheries department and fisheries cooperative Matsyafed should use this opportunity to sanction sufficient money to build a proper fish landing centre as well as storage and sales facilities for fish from the boats."

Kerala: Climate change could disrupt govt's plans for MSME sector

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/dec/19/climate-change-could-disrupt-kerala-govts-plans-for-msme-sector-2529499.html

"The recent report of the Kerala state action plan on climate change put nine districts — Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kasaragod, Palakkad, Alappuzha, Idukki, Kannur, Malappuram, and Kollam — in the "highly vulnerable" category. And with rapid industrialisation being identified as a leading driver of the climate crisis, how the categorisation will impact leading destinations for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the state is a question for all stakeholders to tackle.

Kollam district added about 11,000 MSME units in the first three quarters of this fiscal year. This generated more than 20,000 jobs and more than Rs 500 crore in investment in the sector. Vincent Vijayan, head of the economics department at SN College, says the climate change scenario will harm the MSME sector, particularly in Kollam district, where traditional industries such as cashew, coir, handloom, etc, have always dominated.

“The climate-change scenario will adversely impact traditional industries and the fishing sector. The cashew industry is already on the verge of collapse due to competition from Vietnam and other states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The production of raw cashews will now be impacted by the scenario of a changing environment. Furthermore, the output of raw cashew will suffer,” Vijayan said.

According to Godwin S K, professor at Thiruvananthapuram’s University College, dealing with the climate change scenario would be relatively easy for companies with higher market cap, because big firms have financial backing and can adopt cutting-edge technologies to deal with climate change. However, MSMEs lack the financial resources and technological capabilities to adapt to the changing climate scenario. As a result, MSME industries will be completely wiped out in the long run.

“Climate change is never a big issue for big corporations.” Because they have all the resources, they can easily adapt to changing scenarios. However, MSMEs will bear the brunt of climate change. The sector is already collapsing after demonetization and post GST.” They will now be extinct due to climate change. “As a result, the government must subsidise MSMEs to help them adapt to climate change,” he said.

Additionally, the MSME sector has faced significant challenges in obtaining loans from the formal banking system, which may impede the development of new products or services in response to market demands under climate change, said Kiran Kumar Kakarlapudi, assistant professor at the Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation.

“MSMEs cannot compete in climate-change scenarios unless they receive financial assistance. Furthermore, the sector’s vulnerability to climate change is exacerbated by the fact that many operate outside of the formal sector. These sectors have limited access to the public safety net, formal finance channels, and post climatic disaster insurance, making it difficult for them to recover quickly,” Kiran explained."

Kerala: The Vizhijam port project and challenge of improving the lives of fisherfolk

https://www.livemint.com/opinion/online-views/the-vizhijam-port-project-and-challenge-

of-improving-the-lives-of-fisherfolk-11671428103676.html

"The recent protest regarding the construction of Vizhinjam port in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala's capital city, questions the need for development. The bleak reality of the fisher folk community in southern Kerala seems like a wound. Will the establishment of a port act as a suture? If yes, it can be a milestone development project for the region as it is expected to deliver key promises, including local employment generation. At the same time, introspection about the livelihoods of the fisherfolk community throws up valid concerns.

The Blue Economy and livelihoods: The blue economy can be defined as the "attitude of achieving long-term prosperity by a country or a region befitting the wellbeing of all citizens and mankind while preserving the environment, especially the sea"".

Kerala saw a constant decline in marine fish production over the past decade, except in the year 2018-19, which is due to the active imposition of the amendment of the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act. Moreover, the successive year shows a sharp decline, adding to the blow from the covid pandemic, thus marking a deep downturn in the local blue economy. However, close monitoring of the livelihoods and demographics of these communities reveals a complex social reality which may not be helped with the establishment of the port.

The coastline of Thiruvananthapuram is 78km long, with 1,72,949 of the marine population (Fisheries statistics, 2021), the highest in the state. To understand the population pressure in a coastal area, economists used a demographic parameter called the Coastal Active Fishermen Population Density (CAPD), measured as the number of active fishermen per kilometer of coastal length. Among all Kerala's coastal districts, CAPD is the highest in Thiruvananthapuram, with a positive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 0.65% since 2010. This is in contrast to the overall scenario in the state, where CAPD has declined for the last four years.

According to a study conducted by the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR)-Central Marine Fisheries Institute (CMFRI) 2021, the marine fisheries sector in India is facing disguised unemployment. In layman's terms, disguised unemployment refers to the phenomenon in which more individuals are employed than are actually required. The economic growth witnessed over the years is mainly thanks to increased mechanized and motorized fishing vessels, along with high capital investment.

In Thiruvananthapuram, the number of active marine fishermen grew at a rate of 2.5%, while fish production marked a negative CAGR (-4.64% since 2016), resulting in a decline in per capita fish production. Also, there has been an increase in migrant fishermen from Kanyakumari and nearby places to the capital during these years. So the port, in the long run, can have the

potential to bring more employment opportunities for the people. But the sole establishment of a port may not solve the existing woes of fisherfolks which further got deepened due to erratic climate, apocalyptic floods, Nipah and the pandemic.

Even though Kerala performs relatively well in social indicators, pre-existing vulnerabilities of marginalized sections have negatively impacted the post-pandemic recovery. Taking Amartya Sen's approach of seeing poverty as "capability deprivation"" rather than merely looking through the lens of "low-income status"" can give a multifaceted picture of their livelihoods. Since the inception of mechanization in the fishing sector in the mid-1960s, the living standards of the traditional fisherfolk communities and their lack of access to basic amenities have led to further deprivation. This has created class tension between mechanized boat owners and traditional ones Compared to the average household in Kerala, traditional fisherfolk communities have poor access to proper drinking water and sanitation and record high rates of dropouts from educational institutions. The declining sex ratio (from 953 in 2016 to 885 in 2020, Fisheries statistics 2020) among the fisherfolk of Kerala is an indicator of gender bias and healthcare issues. This sex ratio trend of fisherfolk is in contrast to the state-level rise (from 1049 in 2015-16 to 1,121 in 2020-21, NFHS report).

According to the Fisheries statistics 2021, there are 42 marine villages in the capital city while only three dispensaries have so far been made. Their congested living conditions make them prone to the spread of zoonotic diseases. During covid, they were scorned as "super spreaders"" and underwent discrimination from non-coastal residents. These deprivations and discriminations manifest by way of poverty among the fisherfolk households. This is worse for women-headed households where 80% of allied fishing activities like net mending and fish drying are carried out by women

From the baseline report of the National Multidimensional (NMPI) published by Niti Aayog in 2021, only 0.71% are multidimensionally poor in Kerala, the lowest among all states. Nevertheless, in an attempt to eradicate "extreme poverty"", fisherfolk, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were targeted by government welfare measures as these communities fall under the poorest of poor. The aim is to uplift them from poverty by 2025."

Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Lakshadweep Islands: IMD issues advisory for fishermen to avoid these coasts until December 18

https://zeenews.india.com/india/cyclone-in-andaman-imd-issues-advisory-for-fishermen-to-avoid-these-coasts-until-december-18-2548630.html

"After cyclone Mandous created havoc in Tamil Nadu, a cyclone emerged in the

Andaman Sea and Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has stated that until now, there is a possibility of 'normal rainfall' in South Kerala. In the Arabian Sea, the low pressure along the north Kerala-Karnataka coast is likely to intensify into a severe depression today. IMD further stated that there is a possibility of thunderstorms in various districts on December 13 and 14. The Central Meteorological Department has issued an advisory for fishermen to avoid certain sea coasts until December 18. Strong winds with rains are expected to occur on the Kerala-Karnataka-Lakshadweep coasts on December 13 and 14.

These strong winds are expected at a speed of 40 to 45 kmph with occasional gusts up to 55 kmph. IMD took to Twitter to generate awareness about the cyclone. Hence, IMD in a series of tweets has explained the timeline. ""Fairly widespread rainfall with isolated heavy rainfall likely over the Nicobar Islands on 15th December.

Westcentral Arabian Sea from 15th morning to 18th December. Southwest Arabian Sea from 15th morning to 18th December,"" read one tweet. "Fishermen are advised not to venture into the Andaman Sea from 14th to 15th December. Southeast Bay of Bengal from 14th to 16th December. Central Parts of Bay of Bengal on 17th December," read another tweet.

"Well Marked Low Pressure area over east central and adj southeast Arabian Sea at 0830 hrs IST of 14 Dec. To concentrate into a depression over East-central Arabian Sea by 15 Dec morning," read IMD's tweet."

Kerala: Mandous effect: Heavy rains lash; ban on fishing

https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2022/12/12/heavy-rains-lash-kerala-ban-on-fishing-mandous-effect.html

"Torrential rains have lashed the state due to the effect of cyclone 'Mandous', which has moved over the land area of neighbouring Tamil Nadu. The northern districts received heavy widespread rains on Sunday, while the severity was comparatively less in the southern region. The India Meteorological Department has predicted heavy rains in the state till Tuesday.

It cautioned that the state may experience isolated heavy rains, accompanied by lightning. Cyclone Mandous has weakened into a deep depression, hovering over the North Tamil Nadu coast, South Karnataka, and north Kerala. It is moving towards the South-East Arabian sea through the northern Kerala-Karnataka coast.

According to IMD, it will develop into a low-pressure belt, further moving away from the Indian coast. A yellow alert has been declared in seven districts– Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, and Malappuram districts– today, and four districts– Pathanamthitta,

Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Idukki districts– tomorrow. All these places may receive heavy isolated rains.

The authorities have cautioned fishers venturing into the sea and banned fishing along the Kerala, Karnataka, and Lakshadweep coasts till Tuesday. The IMD has predicted squally weather with winds reaching a speed of 40-45 kmph gusting to 55 kmph on certain occasions."

Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka: Cyclone Mandous remnants to bring rain in these states till Dec 15

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/imd-alerts-cyclone-mandous-remnants-to-bring-rain-in-these-states-till-dec-15-101670777849317-amp.html

"Even though Cyclone Mandous relatively caused lesser impact, its remnants have been forecast to bring rainfall in many southern states and Union territories (UTs) till Thursday (December 15), the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in its latest bulletin.

The cyclone, which made landfall late Friday night by crossing the Tamil Nadu coast with a wind speed of 75 km/hour, weakened into a deep depression on Saturday, the Met department informed. Even so, it claimed the lives of four people in the southern state and led to massive waterlogging and uprooting of trees as well.

According to the latest IMD bulletin, the cyclonic circulation currently lies over north interior Tamil Nadu and adjoining south interior Karnataka and north Kerala. It is likely to emerge into southeast and adjoining east-central Arabian Sea off north Kerala-Karnataka coast. Under this influence, a fresh low-pressure area has been predicted to form over the same region on December 13.

Kerala: Fisheries department sets sights on shift from kerosene boats to sustainable alternatives

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fisheries-department-sets-sights-on-shift-from-kerosene-boats-to-sustainable-alternatives/article66218777.ece

"In a major move towards promoting cost-effective and sustainable practices, the Fisheries department in Kerala will soon launch a programme to convert kerosene engines in the State's fishing fleet. While fishers can choose any alternative that includes petrol, diesel and gas, the government will provide around 50% subsidy for switching to new engines.

"Fishers from the Kerala coast widely use kerosene as fuel and this is not an ideal option for many reasons. While 1 litre kerosene will cover hardly 9 km, you can cruise double the distance

with other fuels as they are more efficient. It is also an attempt to bring down marine pollution caused by kerosene," Fisheries Minister V. Abdurahiman told The Hindu.

While many fishing States have already converted a major portion of their fleet, fishers from Kerala and a couple of districts in Tamil Nadu still stick to kerosene. Currently, over 10,000 fishing boats in Kerala use kerosene, and the department plans to convert them in a phased manner. "Some believe it is the best fuel to navigate the waves, but that is an incorrect notion," the Minister said.

If the fuel cost of a traditional craft with kerosene engine is around ₹60,000 for a single trip, using petrol will reduce it to ₹30,000 and switching to diesel will further bring it down to ₹15,000. While the Fisheries department will provide the fund for changing the carburetor, 40% to 50% subsidy will be offered through Matsyafed for replacing the engine.

Mr. Abdurahiman said the Fisheries department and Indian Oil Corporation Limited will soon conduct a programme in Alappuzha district to demonstrate the advantages of converting to gas. The recent surge in kerosene prices and the delay in the disbursal of subsidised kerosene had put traditional fishers in a difficult situation. At present, they are forced to venture deep due to the lack of resources in territorial waters, he added.

Through awareness programmes and incentives, the department aims at converting maximum number of boats and hopes that fishers will soon realise the substantial benefits of the move, he said. "The major objective is to make fishing profitable and pollution-free. While the engine conversion will bring in a huge difference in operational costs, it will also help in conserving marine ecosystems," said Mr. Abdurahiman."

Kerala: Fishermen killing case, SC directs Rs 5 lakh each be paid to 9 affected

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/italian-marines-case-sc-directs-rs-5-lakh-each-be-paid-to-9-fishermen-1.8078748

"The Supreme Court modified its June 15, 2021 order on Friday and directed that a compensation of Rs 5 lakh each be paid to seven fishermen and the legal heirs of two others, who were affected in an incident of firing by two Italian marines on a boat off the Kerala coast in February 2012. The court directed that the captain-cum-boat owner, Freddy, will be given a compensation of Rs 1.55 crore out of the Rs 2 crore paid by the Italian government earlier for the damage caused to the boat as well as those on board.

The top court last year brought the curtains down on the criminal proceedings initiated in India against the two Italian marines, who were accused of killing two fishermen in the incident, after

an amount of Rs 10 crore was paid in compensation by the Italian government to the heirs of the deceased and the boat owner.

It had directed that the amount of Rs 10 crore, which was deposited in the apex court's registry, be transferred to the Kerala High Court and of the total amount, Rs 4 crore each be paid to the heirs of the two deceased and Rs 2 crore to the owner of fishing boat ""St Antony"". Twelve fishermen, including the boat owner and a minor, were on board ""St Antony"" on the fateful day. Two of them were killed in the firing incident. The minor subsequently committed suicide while another fisherman, Johnson, died during the pendency of the proceedings. A bench of justices M R Shah and M M Sundresh was hearing an application of the seven affected fishermen seeking compensation for the sufferings faced by them due to the trauma following the incident.

The court took into record that the Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) had delivered its award on May 21, 2020, under which the Republic of Italy had agreed to pay a compensation amount of Rs 10 crore over and above the ex-gratia amount already paid to the deceased fishermen. The counsel for the fishermen said the Arbitral Tribunal had decided that India was entitled to payment of compensation in connection with the loss of lives, physical harm, material damage to property and moral harm suffered by the captain and other crew members of the boat. ""This court on June 15, 2021 directed that Rs 2 crore be paid to the boat owner. We were not awarded the compensation despite the Arbitral Tribunal holding that they were entitled for compensation.

This problem happened as earlier we were not part of the proceedings before the court and now, this court's order comes in the way,"" the counsel said. The bench said the dispute is now limited to the distribution of Rs 2 crore between the captain-cum-boat owner and the other fishermen. ""We direct that from the Rs 2 crore to be paid to the captain and the boat owner, Rs 5 lakh each be paid to the seven affected fishermen, the widow of one of the fishermen, Johnson, who died during the pendency of the proceedings, and the legal heirs of the minor who had died after proper verification through account payee cheques,"" the bench said and modified the court's June 15, 2021 order.

At the outset, the counsel for Freddy said his consent for quashing the criminal case against the Italian marines -- Massimilano Latorre and Salvatore Girone -- was obtained by the government on the promise that he will be paid Rs 2 crore as compensation for the damage to the fishing boat and loss of business. The bench said according to the arbitral award of May 21, 2020, compensation should be paid to the captain and other crew members of the boat and hence, Freddy cannot be given the entire amount of Rs 2 crore.

The bench then told the counsel for the fishermen that it will direct an amount of Rs 5 lakh each

to be paid to them. The court's suggestion was accepted by Freddy's counsel. The bench then passed the order and disposed of the application of the fishermen, while directing the Kerala High Court to disburse the amount lying with it as directed by it among the fishermen and the boat owner. On June 15, 2021, the top court had said according to the international arbitral award accepted by India, Italy shall resume further investigation in the case against the two marines. It had quashed the FIR registered at the Coastal police station of Neendakara in Kerala's Kollam district and re-registered by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in 2013 and all the proceedings emanating from the case.

In February 2012, India had accused the two marines on board MV Enrica Lexie -- an Italian-flagged oil tanker -- of killing two Indian fishermen who were on a fishing vessel in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Latorre, who suffered a brain stroke on August 31, 2014, was first granted bail and allowed by the apex court on September 12, 2014 to go to Italy for four months and after that, extensions were given to him. Latorre underwent a heart surgery in Italy, after which the top court granted him an extension of his stay in his native country

The complaint against the marines was submitted to police by Freddy, claiming that two fishermen were killed when the marines opened fire on them allegedly under the misconception that they were pirates."

Kerala: Tourism project threatens livelihood of local fishers at Ezhome in Kannur

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/tourism-project-threatens-livelihood-of-local-fishers-at-ezhome-in-kannur/article66196250.ece

"When people return home at dusk, 62-year-old Kamalakshi and other members of her community (Schedule Caste) at Muttukandi Poduthadam in Ezhome panchayat set out from their homes to the nearby Kuppam-Valapattanam river. When water recedes during low tide, they at once get to work to catch shrimp, crab, and others. However, the recent activities on the tourism front as part of the Malanad Malabar River Cruise project are posing a threat to their livelihood.

Amid the chaos, people like Kamalakshi are helpless as they watch the riverside fast disappear. According to her, such mega projects are proving a death knell for her community, whose members depend on fishing in the riverside for a living, she says.

Rajan, a fisherman, who is known for his initiatives to protect mangroves, says the area has been proposed for the mangrove cruise route. However, large tracts of mangrove forest had already been destroyed for Kaippad farming. “Now, tourism projects are posing a threat. Unfortunately, officials have turned facilitators by remaining mute spectators,” he adds. P.S. Sajeev, president,

Environmental Protection and Research Council, says court rulings, officials are acting in an irresponsible manner.

Incidentally, the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Management Authority is yet to approve the Tourism department's proposal to construct a boat terminal and gallery in the locality as it had failed to specify the location where the project is coming up.

Environmentalist K.P. Chandrangadan says though the matter was taken up with the District Collector and the CRZ Management Authority, there has been no response. According to him, details of the project are not available with the local body concerned. Meanwhile, Taliparamba Revenue Divisional Officer E.P. Mercy, who inspected the area and ordered removal of red soil by December 10, says that a detailed verification of documents is needed. As instructed by District Collector S. Chandrasekar, a team of officials will inspect the area on Tuesday, she says."

Kerala: Move to tap waterbodies for fisheries development

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/move-to-tap-waterbodies-for-fisheries-development/article66165251.ece

"Recognising the contributions made by fish farmers and the fisheries sector, the Government of India is celebrating World Fisheries Day at Daman. The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying is the nodal agency behind this initiative.

Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Parshottam Rupala, MoS Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, MoS Dr. L. Murugan, along with other administrative personnel are going to participate in the occasion. To begin with, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying has organised various awards at different levels to recognise the best practices involved in the fisheries sector. The awards are categorised into Inland, Marine, Hilly & North-eastern region, and they will be distributed to the best state, district, and quasi-government organisations/federations/corporations respectively. Moreover, awards to the best fish farmer, best hatchery, best fisheries enterprises, best fisheries co-operative societies/FPOs/SHGs, best individual entrepreneurs, and best innovation idea/technology infusion will also be presented.

Keeping up with the pace of technological advancements happening in the sector, an exhibition pertaining to various technologies developed by institutes/government organizations/ private sector is being organised. The event will also witness the launch of the Video Song on Sagar Parikrama – Gujrati Version, SSS: India @75 – "100 Super Success Stories from Indian Fisheries", as well as posters and other publications.

In India, the fish farming sector has always been a very prominent source of livelihood, especially in the coastal regions of our country. The sector is responsible for providing livelihood to more than 25 million fishers and fish farmers. In addition, the sector provides various livelihood opportunities indirectly linked with fish farmers or fishers.

The schemes are focused on transforming the fisheries sector and having a sustainable approach toward fisheries and aquaculture. In what can be termed as the "Blue Revolution" in the country. Realising the huge potential and dependency of a major portion of the population on the sector, the Government has launched various schemes and initiatives. Prime Minister Modi in May 2020 launched the "Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojna (PMMSY)" with an estimated budget of Rs 20,050 crores, over five years.

Earlier in November 2022, Under the PMMSY scheme, Prime Minister Modi laid the foundation stone for the modernisation and upgradation of the Visakhapatnam Fishing Harbour. The project is built with an estimated cost of 150 crores, after completion the project aims to double the handling capacity from 150 tons per day to about 300 tons per day.

It is a flagship scheme focused on the development of the fisheries sector and doubling the incomes of fishers and fish farmers. Announced as a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan in May 2020, the scheme is an Umbrella scheme for various other government initiatives and projects by the Government in the fisheries sector.

The scheme aims for the adoption of 'Cluster or Area-based Approaches' and ultimately creating fisheries clusters through backward and forward linkages. The scheme targets enhancement in fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonne and increase fisheries export earnings to 1,00,000 crore by 2024-25. Further, the scheme also envisioned generating employment opportunities through seaweed and ornamental fish cultivation and to bring new interventions such as fishing vessel insurance, support for upgradation of fishing vessels/boats, integrated aqua parks, e-trading/marketing, etc."

Kerala: Protest brewing against move to "subvert" one-rice-and-one-fish policy in pokkali lands

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/protest-brewing-against-move-to-subvert-one-rice-and-one-fish-policy-in-pokkali-lands/article66132616.ece

"Protest is brewing against a recent government order permitting paddy field owners to engage year-round fish farming without undertaking the mandatory paddy cultivation in pokkali fields. Those opposed to the order issued by the Directorate of Fisheries alleged that the State government was pressured to change the crop calendar in favour of the saline aquaculture lobby.

The government move, according to experts, is detrimental to the interests of fishermen, agricultural workers and subsistence farmers.

As per the government mandated crop calendar, pokkali fields should be allocated exclusively for paddy cropping from April 15 to November 14 every year. Saline aquaculture is permissible in the remaining five months when salinity levels are high in the adjacent water bodies.

In a letter sent to Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D. Raja, a group of former jurists, experts and scientists has decried the move stating that a section of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) government was trying to dilute the Inland Fisheries Act and ""subvert the policy of one crop of rice and one crop of fish in the pokkali lands.""

Seeking the intervention of Mr. Raja, the group demanded that the government withdrew the order. ""It is environmentally disastrous to permit brackish water to stagnate in these ecologically fragile fields throughout the year. This form of unique cropping that is endemic, salt resilient, and flood tolerant is to be protected from the forages by the saline aquaculture lobby,"" the letter reads.

The letter is signed by K. Sukumaran, P.K. Shamsudheen, K. Aravindashan, V. Sreekumar, N.K. Sashidharan, K.G. Padmakumar, and Madhusudana Kurup. The Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi (TUCI) has demanded action against erring Fisheries department officials and those trying to destroy the biodiversity."

Kerala: Fishermen's wait for subsidised kerosene continues

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishermens-wait-for-subsidised-kerosene-continues/article66120259.ece

"Even after a wait of over six months and frequent protests, the government is yet to consider fishermen's plea to resume the supply of kerosene at subsidised rate. Suspected sale of kerosene in the black market is in full swing on the coastal belt targeting outboard engine operators who have no other means to survive.

In Kozhikode district alone, there are over 3,000 fishing boats fitted with outboard engines. All of them are heavily dependent on private kerosene distributors who charge exorbitant rates. The situation has remained unchanged for over six months with no intervention by the authorities.

"The quality of stock available with private suppliers is very poor, and we suspect rampant adulteration. Such low-quality kerosene will damage outboard engines," said V.C. Rasheed, a fisherman from Beypore. Boat operators have no option but to buy kerosene at ₹140 a litre

without any subsidy from private suppliers, he added.

According to fishermen, a subsidy of ₹25 was available for a litre of kerosene. Though it was not enough, its cancellation hit fishermen badly, they said. Interestingly, States such as Tamil Nadu have been making interventions to ensure steady availability of good-quality stock at an affordable price. Meanwhile, some fishermen's organisations have called upon members to prepare for a State-level protest. They have held meetings at various harbours to express solidarity with boat owners and take up the matter with the government in a more persuasive way.

"The operational cost of boats, apart from the steep decline in daily catch, is dragging the fishing industry to a total loss these days. The only way out is to maintain possible government assistance, besides considering new projects for their welfare," said K. Rajan, a former functionary of a State-level fishermen's welfare committee. He added that the lack of coordination among fishermen's organisations had resulted in the Central and State governments cold-shouldering various welfare initiatives."

Kerala: fishing communities unfurl their COP27 message – "United For Climate Justice"

https://www.greenpeace.org/india/en/press/14778/kerala-fishing-communities-unfurl-their-cop27-message-unitedforclimatejustice/

"COP27 is set to be held from 6th to 18th November in Egypt as countries come together to discuss their collective climate goals. As a response to COP27 and the unfolding climate crisis, on November 8th, Greenpeace India along with Kerala fishing communities unfurled a 27 ft-by-60 ft banner on the open waters of the Chellanam Harbour, one of the worst erosion-impacted coastlines, which read "UNITED FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE". The aim is to highlight the increasing impacts of climate change and to demand climate justice at COP27. Through this photo-op, impacted fishing communities demanded action from those in power to match the efforts of vulnerable communities and climate justice movements in fighting climate change.

The public action was part of three events organised at Fort Kochi and Chellanam, Kerala, from 5th to 8th of November 2022. The events witnessed critical stakeholders from vulnerable communities across India coming together to express solidarity and challenge the inaction on climate change by country leaders and world leaders. This is a crucial step in the fight for climate justice, as historically marginalised communities, though having the least contributions towards causing the climate crisis, are the most affected by extreme global warming-induced weather events.

"We have put out this message because it is high time the world sees the real-time impact of climate change. We are losing our homes and livelihoods to erratic weather events. Fishing is our only source of income, and it is becoming increasingly challenging to go out into the sea, make a living and feed our families. Political leaders across the world have wasted enough time. Now, there should be quick, real solutions to our problems. The world needs to know our story." said Anthony Thayil, KSMTF Erakulum District President.

The key objective of these events was to create momentum and public conversations towards demanding a scientific and community knowledge-driven Climate Adaptation Plan across India. The community members sent the message that they are facing the brunt of climate change already and, at the same time, are stepping up to create spaces for solidarity, hope and resilience. They demanded that their actions should be backed up by the state and society members as they continue to work on radical hope.

Avinash Chanchal, Campaign Manager at Greenpeace India, commented, "The latest IPCC reports highlight the widespread losses and damages to nature and people being caused by the climate crisis. Our climate adaptation policies must align with climate justice and acknowledge that this crisis disproportionately affects marginalised and underprivileged populations and, therefore, ensure that their lives and livelihoods are protected. Furthermore, we will require immediate changes at a systemic level to rapidly decarbonise our economies. Ambitious declarations without any impactful implementation is essentially hollow talk, and must be called out as such."

The programme's participants included farmers from Maharashtra who faced drought and excess unseasonal rainfall, fishworkers and coastal dwellers from Chellanam, inland fish workers and residents of the Sundarbans, youth from fishing communities of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and the survivors of the 2018 floods in Kerala who were rescued by the Chellanam fishing community.

Parallel to (and in response to) COP 27, Greenpeace India conducted a Roundtable Conference at Fort Kochi on 8th November. The conference hosted eminent speakers from various stakeholder groups with a special emphasis on impacted communities. The participants discussed critical issues around climate change such as vulnerability, climate adaptation, the relevance of community action and citizen's movements, loss and damage, and climate justice.

The speakers included Jackson Pollayil, State President, Kerala Independent Fish workers Federation; Hibi Eden, MP, Ernakulam; Lalit Babar, Ambedkar Sheti Vikas Sansodhan Sanstha; Sankar Haldar, Director, MUKTI (Sundarbans) and impacted community members from the Sunderbans. The main demand from the event was climate justice for the most vulnerable, linked to responsibility and accountability. Ernakulam MP Shri Hibi Eden offered space to raise

questions in the winter parliament session, which added strength and hope to the gathering.

Jackson Pollayil, State President, Kerala Independent Fish workers Federation said, “It is important to have these conversations around community resilience and adaptation to extreme weather events and climate change. Fishermen from Chellanam have been experiencing increasing frequency and intensity of cyclones and rising sea levels. And I can see there are several other communities here who are experiencing varying degrees of the climate crisis. These disasters should not be looked at as individual freak incidents anymore, and instead should become part of the global discourse on Loss and Damage and climate adaptation.”

Between 5th to 7th November, Greenpeace India conducted a storytelling workshop in Kerala for youth community members who have been at the forefront of climate change resilience in Kerala.

As first-line respondents in many situations, the participants were encouraged to document and retell climate stories in realtime to bring out community-based climate resilience stories. Through sessions held by various resource persons, the participants were enabled to respond to climate change and related events through photography, videography and content creation for social media and digital platforms.

Greenpeace India is pushing to work with communities that are the first witnesses of climate change to collectivise their voices — and sees it as imperative that their stories are documented and told by the communities members themselves. The workshop paved the way towards active engagement of the youth and members of the stakeholder communities in Kerala and India.

“We should act if we want to save ourselves. Nature knows how to pay back for the atrocities we commit against her. We are not indispensable, it’s the other way round. Let us realise that, the sooner the better.” says Dr Shahina Rafeeq, writer and workshop participant.

With these events, Greenpeace India aims to create urgency and build solidarity among impacted communities and climate justice movements. This will help to amplify the voices of those most affected by climate change and send an affirmative call-to-action on the need for fast-tracking climate adaptation for vulnerable communities."

Kerala fishing communities unfurl their COP27 message – #UnitedForClimateJustice

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Kerala: Plan for comprehensive development of fisheries sector in State with Norwegian assistance

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/plan-for-comprehensive-development-of-fisheries-sector-in-state-with-norwegian-assistance-minister/article66092300.ece

"The State government is set to launch an action plan for the comprehensive development of the fisheries sector in Kerala with Norwegian partnership, Fisheries Minister V. Abdurahiman has said. He was addressing a discussion organised in connection with the formation of various action programmes that can be implemented in the fisheries sector with the cooperation of Norway. The discussion was organised here on Thursday as a follow-up to the Chief Minister's visit to the country.

Stating that the State has collaborated with Norway since the 1950s to develop the fisheries sector, the Minister said the main task of the Kerala delegation participating in the discussion was to learn advanced technologies in the fisheries and aquaculture sectors from Norwegian institutions.

Norway's advanced technologies, infrastructure, and precision were astonishing. An action plan formulation team, comprising diplomats, administrators, planning and development officials and representatives of the scientific community, had been formed. In the first phase of collaboration between Kerala and Norway, projects related to fisheries and aquaculture would be developed. This would benefit the young fishing community and allied sectors.

There was also a plan to create a corpus fund to promote collaborative research and other programmes between the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) and Norwegian universities. Norwegian institutions, including universities in the region, had urged the government to set up such a fund to support students. To prepare a roadmap for further development of the fisheries sector in the State, Kufos would host a workshop ensuring the participation of global experts, said the Minister."

Kerala: Fisherfolk to venture into deep sea fishing

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/kerala-fisherfolk-to-venture-into-deep-sea-fishing-1.8008125

"The fishing community in the state is all set to venture into deep sea fishing. It is learnt that the cooperative groups of the fisherfolk will go fishing in the deep sea with the partnership of government agencies. At present, only private fishing boats are engaged in deep sea fishing. It is for the first time, the government is associating with deep sea fishing. Deep sea fishing is implemented in Kerala as part of the central government's Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). With this, the government aims to increase fish production annually by 9 per cent and double the revenue from fish export.

Traditional fishermen have been venturing into the sea up to 12 nautical miles from the coast. As per the deep sea fishing policy, fishermen are allowed to venture into the sea beyond 200 nautical miles in the Indian EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone).

As fishing activities are on the rise on the Kerala coast, it will affect the fish wealth in the state. It is observed that deep sea fishing will decrease the impacts on fish wealth in the state. Sources close to the fisheries department reported that 10 boats will be operated in the first phase of for deep sea fishing. Boats will be constructed under Cochin Shipyard. A 10-member beneficiary group in the model of self-help groups will be created as part of the project. Training will be provided to these groups. Each group will get the boat and related facilities. An expenditure of Rs 1.5 cr is estimated for this deep sea fishing unit."

Kerala: One-time settlement scheme for fishers launched

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/one-time-settlement-scheme-for-fishers-launched/article66057578.ece

"The government aims to ensure safe and profitable livelihood for fishers, said Fisheries Minister V. Abdurahiman here on Wednesday. He was speaking at the State-level inauguration of Matsyafed's one-time settlement scheme waiving off the interest and penalty interest of loans taken by fishers at St. Sebastian Parish Hall, Neendakara.

"This is a time when modernisation is essential in the fisheries sector. Efficient systems are being set up to prepare the necessary conditions for this. Steps will be taken to upgrade the existing harbours. Matsyafed has been implementing measures to empower the fisher cooperatives and provide assistance to fishers in each region," said the Minister.

The scheme will free from debt 36,148 fishermen who had taken loans under various projects by

waiving off the interest and penalty interest. The scheme will be implemented through district-level adalats conducted by Department officials. The applications will be settled by the Adalat Committee, which consists of the Matsyafed chairman, managing director, members of the district level governing body and officials from the Fisheries Department.

One-time settlement adalats in all coastal districts will be held from November 1 to 14 and the adalat in Kollam will be held on November 3. Matsyafed chairman T. Manoharan presided over the function while disbursal of accident insurance claims, flagging off of mobile fish mart Anthi Pacha, distribution of micro-finance loans and interest free loans for fisher women and handing over of vehicles to fish vendors were also held at the event. N.K. Premachandran MP, Dr. Sujith Vijayanpillai MLA, P. P Chittaranjan, MLA and Matsya Board Chairman Kotai Basheer were present on the occasion."

Kerala: Fisheries sector policies triggering crisis, say fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/centres-policies-triggering-crisis-say-fishers/article66044338.ece

"Owners of traditional fishing canoes as well as larger vessels will meet at the Thoppumpady Fisheries Harbour on Tuesday to discuss what the Fisheries Co-ordination Committee, representing vessel owners, described as a crisis in the making as a result of the Centre's proposed policies. The Union government is going ahead with its policy to hand over the deep sea fishing segment to monopolies, said a spokesman of the co-ordination committee.

The meeting will also discuss the Indian Navy's claim that it was not responsible for the recent incident in which a fisherman was shot at. The Navy's stand indicated that fishermen's lives as well as their source of livelihood were in jeopardy, the committee said.

Fishers had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the incident on September 7 in which a fisherman from Pallithode in Alappuzha district was hit by a shell from a firearm. According to fishers, the shell that hit the fisherman, Sebastian, was found inside the modified traditional canoe Al-Rehman 1. The fishers requested the Prime Minister to order an inquiry into the incident and establish a system to ensure that such incidents did not recur.

The committee will meet in Alappuzha on Sunday before the meet of the general body in Kochi at the Longline and Gillnet Boat Owners' Association Hall."

Kerala: Centre's policies triggering crisis, say fishers

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Kerala: Deep sea fishers demand relaxation of licence renewal norms

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/deep-sea-fishers-demand-relaxation-of-licence-renewal-norms/article66021571.ece

All India Deep Sea Fishers' Association, has appealed to the State Fisheries Minister to instruct fisheries officers to come to the Kochi fisheries harbour rather than the Vypeen harbour for inspection of distant-water fishing boats for renewal of registration.

In an appeal to the minister, the association put up a set of demands in view of the difficulties being faced by the more than 350 distant-water fishing boats that operate out of Kochi and now need to renew their licences. There are more than 600 such boats operating off the coast of Kerala and about half of them had completed the formalities, said association president Charles George on Monday.

Association secretary M. Majeed said the government must do away with its insistence that boats from Tamil Nadu carry licences from that State. The association leaders are also of the view that the arrears in registration fees for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 should be done away with

because little or no fishing activity was allowed during the years because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The deep sea fishing vessel owners also demanded that fines imposed on boats with painting damage and shortage of lifebuoys and jackets should be foregone by the government and that more time should be given to boats to renew their licences online.

Kerala: Fishers seek crafts powered by diesel, LPG

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/oct/06/fishers-seek-crafts-powered-by-diesel-lpg-2505209.html

"Considering the soaring price and scarcity of kerosene, the state government should help the traditional fishermen to purchase diesel or LPG powered country craft for marine fishing demanded Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi.

“Most of the country craft used by traditional fishermen for marine fishing use kerosene engine. The price of kerosene ranges from Rs 123 to Rs 127 per litre. Though the government provides a subsidy of Rs 25 per litre , each country craft will get only 129 litres a month which is not sufficient for a single day. The Matsyafed provides 145 litres of kerosene per month at subsidised rate.

But the fishermen have to pay the full amount while purchasing kerosene and the subsidy will be distributed after three years. The high price of kerosene has made the fuel unaffordable to fishermen, said Matsya Thozhilali Aikya vedi state president Charles George.

He also demanded that the state should reject the Central government’s offer to provide two big fishing vessels for deep sea fishing. “The Centre’s move is to open the fishing sector for corporates. Kerala had earlier sought Central assistance to provide 44 modern fishing boats to fishermen,” he said."

Kerala: Inland fishers worried over disappearance of giant shrimps, urge government to clean up backwaters

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/inland-fishers-worried-over-disappearance-of-giant-shrimps-urge-govt-to-clean-up-backwaters/article65975575.ece

"Rapid formation of sandbars in Vembanad and neighbouring lakes and the virtual disappearance of giant shrimps have forced inland fishers to appeal to the government to call a meeting of the Fisheries Management Council to discuss issues confronting them.

Fishers have reiterated their demand that the government act on its promises to clean up backwaters, remove silt, and create a situation conducive for the smooth movement of water in lakes, said V.M. Aanandan of Enzhupunna-Thuravur Inland Fisheries Development and Welfare Cooperative based at Aroor.

He added that around seven lakh people, including those engaged in ancillary work, depended on inland fisheries in the backwaters. The lakes and their resources provided employment to thousands who took to fishing during the pandemic. “Backwaters have such potential, and we are ignoring it,” he said.

In a letter to the Fisheries Director on Thursday, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, an independent fishers’ union, appealed to the Fisheries department to act on the promise that the government would step in to clean up backwaters stretching from Aroor to Fort Kochi and covering the Kumbalanghi lake and its northern parts; Kaithappuzha and Veluthulli backwaters covering areas such as Ezhupunna as well as a portion of the lake collective at Mohamma and neighbouring areas in Alappuzha district.

Mr. Aanandan said the disappearance of giant shrimps from backwaters between Thanneermukkam and Fort Kochi over the past four years was a matter of grave concern. Besides, catching of juvenile clams or malli kakka has led to substantial loss of precious resources. There were almost no profitable and serious fishing activities in the eastern belt of the Kaithappuzha lake and the segment between Kumbalanghi and Pashnithode, he added. “The loss is a double whammy for inland fisheries when juvenile clams are caught because not only do we lose meat but also clam shells, which go into lime manufacturing industry,” he said.

Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi said the Fisheries Management Committee should also discuss the fallout of the demolition of a private leisure resort on Nediyanthuruthu island in the Vembanad Lake. There are 53 small units as well as another large building that will have to be demolished, ensuring that the debris from the demolition did not further aggravate pollution and disruption in fishing activities, he said. The leaders claimed that constant encroachment and lack of oversight resulted in the size of lakes shrinking to about one-third of their original area about half-a-century ago."

Kerala and Norway to work together in areas of fishing, mariculture and maritime cluster

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/norway-kerala-to-work-together-in-areas-of-fishing-mariculture-and-maritime-cluster/article65972646.ece

"Norway will cooperate with Kerala in the areas of fishing, mariculture and maritime cluster, Norwegian Fisheries and Ocean Policy Minister Bjornar Selnes Skjaeran said on

Wednesday following his discussions with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Mr. Vijayan, who is in Norway on an official tour with a delegation from Kerala, recollected the Kerala-Norway connection since the time of the Indo-Norwegian project at Neendakara in 1953, aimed at the modernisation of the fisheries sector in the State.

Mr. Vijayan recalled the positive changes that were ushered in Kerala's fisheries sector following the Indo-Norwegian project. It was in 1952 that under the aegis of the United Nations that India and Norway signed a tripartite agreement for the development of the fisheries sector as well as the quality of life of the fishermen community.

The project which was started at Neendakara in 1953 was shifted to Ernakulam in 1961. An ice plant and a workshop with a slipway for the fishing boats were established in Ernakulam. It was the Indo-Norwegian project which helped the growth of mechanised fishing and the seafood industry in Kerala. For decades, Kerala has thus been ahead of all other States as far as seafood production is concerned, Mr. Vijayan said.

The Cochin Shipyard had recently constructed two electric barges for Norway. The Norwegian Fisheries Minister said that ship building at the Cochin Shipyard was a major area of cooperation for Norway and that he would be interested in strengthening the cooperation in this sector. The State government is also considering the setting up of a maritime cluster centred in Kochi, the importance of which was explained by Industries Minister P. Rajeeve.

Apart from fisheries and maritime culture, aquaculture is another area where Norway can cooperate with Kerala, the Norwegian Minister said. Norway's commercial aquaculture industry has been very progressive and sustainable and the Fisheries University in Kerala will take up the technical discussions with Norway in this regard, the Kerala Minister for Fisheries V. Abdurahman said.

The State's delegation included vice chairperson of the State Planning Board V. K. Ramachandran, Chief Secretary V.P. Joy, Kerala Government's Officer on Special Duty in New Delhi Venu Rajamani, and Principal Secretary (Fisheries and Tourism) K. S. Srinivas."

Kerala: Pokkali, a GI-tagged rice variety, could be on the verge of extinction

https://india.mongabay.com/2022/10/commentary-pokkali-a-gi-tagged-rice-variety-could-be-on-the-verge-of-extinction/

"Pokkali rice is a saline-tolerant, indigenous rice variety grown in the Alappuzha, Thrissur and Ernakulam districts of Kerala. In Malayalam, Pokkam means height and Aali means plant. This lesser-known rice variety is developed in low-lying coastal areas and employs one of

the oldest organic farming techniques. Pokkali is a system in which the farming alternates between rice and prawn; the fields are used alternately for rice farming and prawn and shrimp cultivation.

Coastal wetlands, the highly productive yet fragile ecosystems, are fast deteriorating due to several anthropogenic factors like unsustainable resource exploitation, habitat destruction, intensive aquaculture or permanent alteration for other uses. Traditionally, the coastal wetlands in many parts of India have been used for sequential paddy-fish cultivation under different forms of institutional structures. In West Bengal, this agriculture-fisheries integration is known as bheries, in Karnataka it is called gajani, in Goa and Maharashtra it is called khazaan and in Kerala it's pokkali.

Traditionally, the coastal wetlands in many parts of India have been used for sequential paddy-fish cultivation under different forms of institutional structures. In Kerala it is called Pokkali. In the recent years there's a decline in Pokkali cultivation.

In this commentary, the authors interview the farmers who cultivate the unique variety of the GI-tagged Pokkali rice to understand the reasons for the decline in cultivation.
A shortage of skilled labour, the lack of technology that suits a soggy soil, low crop prices and the disturbance to and encroachment of the marine and estuarine ecosystems are the main factors for the decline of this sustainable farming practice.

Pokkali fields are prepared for cultivation from April 14 or 15, around the time of Vishu, the traditional Malayali new year. During the monsoon that follows, the water level in the Pokkali field rises and the Pokkali rice grows above the water up to one metre. During the low tide condition, the excess water is let out through the sluice openings; during high tide, the backwater is allowed to enter the field. By mid-September, the crop is ready for harvest. The rice is harvested by cutting the panicle from the top and the remaining plant part is left in the water column for decomposition. This then acts as the feed for prawn cultivation. After the harvest of Pokkali rice, the field is kept idle for the proper decomposition of the remains. By November, the local prawn larvae varieties (such as naran, choodan, etc.) reach the field when the sluice shutters are opened, along with the brackish water from the sea during high tides.

Many farmers cultivate tiger prawns and crabs, along with the local prawn varieties in the same field. Prawns in the Pokkali field feed on the leftover organic matter from decayed crops. By March, prawn harvesting is done using the nets on the sluice gates. When the water leaves the field, prawns move along with the flow and get trapped in the net. As Pokkali rice is cultivated using organic farming methods, prawns grown in the same field are also organic. They are famous for their unique taste and have a high export value. The integrated rotational farming of rice-fish cultivation exhibits 'mutualism'. These prawn seedlings feed on the crop leftovers, and

the crop absorbs the nutrients from the shedding of the prawn scales and other remnants.

Pokkali is cultivated with no fertilisers, be it chemical or organic, as it is grown in waterlogged areas. Pokkali can claim the title 'organic' as it is grown in water, and even if pesticides were added, the change in seawater level washes away the pesticides. This organically-grown rice is famous for its medicinal qualities and peculiar taste and has high protein and fibre content. Due to its geographical specificity, Pokkali was conferred a geographical indication (GI) tag in the year 2008.

According to Pokkali Land Development Agency, Pokkali farming across Kerala has declined from 25,000 hectares to about 4,000 hectares. That said, the actual agriculture takes place in less than 1,000 hectares. They say that this decline has also affected prawn farming. What reasons led to this decline?

Unemployment has been growing in Kerala at an average of eight percent per annum, which is higher than the national average. To make matters more complex, there is a considerable shortage of workers for MNREGA work.

Benny, a Pokkali farm owner, said, "One of the major problems noted is the lack of labour to perform this traditional farming, where on average 207 human-days per hectare are required to cultivate Pokkali, that too skilled labourers. Moreover, harvesting must be done by standing in water, and the workers cannot be engaged beyond noon."

On average the male labourers are paid Rs. 950-1,150 per day, whereas female labourers are paid Rs. 350-550 per day, depending on the intensity of work. MGNREGA guarantees Rs. 311 daily for basic work. However, these wages are not drawing enough labour force. According to Sarasamma, a Pokkali farmer, "MGNREGA should not run during cultivation period to avoid this labour shortage, or they should be directed to work on fields". Unavailability of labour coupled with the increase in wages to draw workforce has increased the cost of production of Pokkali.

It's also noted that the average age of farmers engaged in this Pokkali farming ranges between 50 and 60 years, and there is no trace of a younger generation choosing to cultivate this rice variety. Thankamma, a Pokkali farmer, said, "I have been cultivating Pokkali for the last 40 years. My children have zero interest in farming, and I am not sure whether these farms would exist after my death."

There's also another big challenge – migrant labourers. The introduction of interstate migrant labourers who provide cheap and flexible services in the state into Pokkali fields would pose

threat to the existing local labour, opine social activists. One of them says, “Employment of inter-state migrant workmen in any farm is prohibited unless it is duly agreed by the local trade unions,”

“Political parties treat trade unions as appendages to boost vote banks. There is little democracy in the functioning of the trade unions. The blocks show little concern for more significant issues such as growing unemployment, declining industries and loss of producer confidence,” says another farmer.

Mechanisation has revolutionised the agricultural sector in India. It has helped to reduce the cost of cultivation/ production and overcome the labour shortage. However, the latest technology has not benefited Pokkali cultivation, as the technology cannot be used in a soggy soil. “The terrain is not conducive to mechanised tilling,” says farmers. The Government and Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur, have made many attempts to bring suitable machinery to sort the problem, in vain. This is a reason why the rice variety remains labour-intensive.

A geographical Indication (GI) tag is an intellectual property right that signals the uniqueness. The GI tag helps farmers promote the product and fetch a reasonable price premium. However, 80 percent of the farmers surveyed are unaware of the GI tag, its possibilities and its opportunities.

Paliyakkal Service Cooperative Bank ,Ezhikkara markets Pokkali rice and its value-added products such as Puttupodi, Pachari, Karkidakakanji etc. The cooperative sells these products to organic stores in and around Ernakulam city. When consumers are ready to pay more than Rs.100 for a kilo of Basmati rice, organic rice like Pokkali fails to get introduced in the larger market.

“Kerala government offers a minimum support price of Rs. 29 per kilogram for Pokkali and is available at the market for consumers at Rs. 150 per kilogram. It is difficult to continue when our organically produced rice is so under-priced,” says a representative from Pokkali Padashekhara Samithi, a collective of farmers.

Beyond these local challenges, several exogenous factors are leading to the decline of Pokkali cultivation. The establishment of industrial projects such as the International Container Trans-Shipment Terminal (ICTT) otherwise known as Vallarpadam container terminal, has damaged Pokkali Paddy cultivation field. It acquired almost 24 hectares of wetland (Government, 2005). The immediate impact on Pokkali is the reduction of land area under cultivation. Also, it obstructs the natural flow of tidal waves into the field. The rapid urbanisation of the areas boosted the land prices and encouraged farmers to stop farming and sell the fields. Most of the

fields are purchased by MNCs and builders.

'One paddy, one crop' is a scheme launched by Government of Kerala to promote organic cultivation of paddy and aquaculture alternatively on the same crop year. The scheme could have stimulated paddy production to some extent. Nevertheless, many farmers went against the scheme as they favoured doing aquaculture alone as it is more profitable.

To survive, farmers demanded that the government form a committee to look into the problems of Pokkali cultivation. They also require revising the base price to Rs. 120 per kilogram to help farmers with the cultivation needs, such as strengthening the outer bunds and solving labour shortages through MGNREGA workers.

The capital-intensive shrimp culture, industrial expansion, ports, harbours, resort and hotels for tourism while have been responsible for the shrinking of the traditional coastal rice-fish farming across the coastal wetlands of India. There has also been inherent difficulty primarily being economic incentive to motivate younger generation to take up this practice. Labour and skill shortage further adds to the problem. In such a scenario, there is an urgent need to deliberate on the survival of this heritage practice before it becomes history."

Kerala: Illegal overfishing adds to concerns of fish stock depletion in Vembanad Lake

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/illegal-overfishing-adds-to-concerns-of-fish-stock-depletion-in-vembanad-lake/article65959052.ece

"Scenes of fishermen pushing their country boats through Vembanad Lake and casting their nets wider on the water can be a perfect representation of countryside Kerala. An inquiry with the Fisheries department, however, suggests that the fish wealth in the brackish water system has been under severe stress due to predatory fishing. Several people, mostly outsiders, are crowding together along the region to take advantage of the lucrative fish-breeding grounds here.

Taking a serious note of the issue, the Fisheries department has launched an extensive patrolling across the region that has resulted in seizure of several hundreds of banned fishing gears. The news of policing on the water, meanwhile, has created a deterrent effect among the illegal fishers for the time being.

"Illegal fishing gears including nets of small mesh size have been seized from areas including Pallam, Kumarakom, Methran Kayal, and Pathupangu. Most of them were found at the mouth of the polder networks, which serve as the breeding ground for inland fish stock during the monsoon,'' says Benny Williams, Deputy Director of Fisheries, Kottayam.

To make sure that the illegal operators do not return to the spot, the department has launched patrolling operations in the backwater landscape. “The practice is leading to a widespread depletion of inland fish stock, as these gears do not spare even the smallest of fishlings, which are not of any use even to the catchers,’’ adds the official.

Meanwhile, official sources say a handful of Chinese nets that were dismantled a couple of years ago citing lack of registration and licence have resurfaced in the lake. “The majority of these nets, which made a return during the pandemic period, is concentrated in and around the Thanneermukkom barrage.”

Pointing to a widespread depletion of the overall fish stock in the brackish water system over the previous decades , experts have warned of a devastating consequence of this illegal overfishing to the local fishing community. As per estimates by the International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming, the overall fish wealth in the lake has come down from 23,000 tonnes to about 4,700 tonnes in the recent years.

“The rise of marauding fishery is just one among an array of anthropogenic activities that is depleting the resources of the Vembanad. The rest include pollution of the lake, presence of the Thannermukkom barrage, and the loss of riparian vegetation,” says K.G. Padmakumar, director of the centre."

Kerala: Fishers to be trained in deep-sea fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-to-be-trained-in-deep-sea-fishing/article65903093.ece

"Bid to promote sustainable fishery with resources in coastal waters fast depleting. Around hundred fishers selected from various marine districts across the State will be soon trained in deep-sea fishing techniques such as gillnetting and longlining. While the orientation for the first batch of 30 fishers will begin at Mangaluru next week, other training sessions will be held at Central government institutes and deep-sea vessels.

“Only limited number of boats from Kerala venture beyond 50 nautical miles and engage in deep-sea fishing. Marine resources in coastal waters are fast depleting and this is an attempt to promote sustainable fishery management,” says an official. Usually, coastal waters up to 30 nautical miles see maximum fishing activity and Kerala’s fleet size is far beyond what is ideal. “According to studies, most of our fishery wealth lies in deep sea and it is time we switch to scientific and sustainable methods,” he adds.

Deep-sea fishing is considered to be a risky affair and most trawlers from Kerala employ fishers from Tamil Nadu for multi-day trips. “You will see that most crew members are from

other States, especially Tamil Nadu, as they have a long legacy of deep-sea fishing. They can spend any number of days at sea while our fishers want to return within four to five days. If the training can equip them for the trip, it can change the scene," he says.

The fishers were selected from various fishermen co-operative societies based on expertise and technical know-how. All the fishers are members of societies affiliated to Matsyafed, which will be in charge of marketing the catch. A total of ten groups have been selected and after training they will be provided deep-sea fishing vessels, each costing around ₹1.5 crore. Government subsidies and bank loan will cover the major portion of investment with minimal beneficiary contribution.

"A sum of ₹1 crore will be given as subsidy while ₹45 lakh will be provided as bank loan with 5% interest. The beneficiary contribution of each group will be ₹5 lakh," says the official. The vessels will be mainly targeting under-exploited species such as yellowfin tuna and squid. Since the vessels can go beyond the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), their storage capacity will be high. "They can stay in deep sea for several days and the vessels will also have slurry ice units to preserve the catch," adds the official."

Kerala: Tension prevails as fishermen, local residents stage protest in front of port

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/vizhinjam-tension-prevails-as-fishermen-local-residents-stage-protest-in-front-of-port/article65907382.ece

"Tension prevailed at Vizhinjam on Sunday when a section supporting the port project and the protesting fishermen led by the Latin Archdiocese stood face to face with provocative slogans for a while. However, timely intervention by the police to disperse the two sides prevented any escalation of the tension. A civil police officer, Shaji, was injured in the melee when the police stood in the middle to separate the two groups.

A bike rally comprising local residents, including women, who bat for the port project reached the protest venue first. The police then blocked the rally from entering the protest venue of fishermen, using barricades. This was followed by another march led by the Latin Archdiocese, which spearheads the fishermen's protest, to the venue.

The police then stood between two groups of people, who raised slogans and booed at each other, to avoid any untoward incident. However, some of the fishermen tried to sneak into the sit-in site of the local residents, which was prevented by the police by parking police buses in the middle. At times, the protestors and the local residents nearly came to blows. A section of protesters also allegedly vandalised the flex boards and flags put up by various political parties.

Meanwhile, the march, titled Jana Bodhana Yatra taken out from Moolampally in Ernakulam district on September 14 expressing solidarity with the protesting fishers reached the protest venue. The rally was taken out from the Vizhinjam fishing harbour to the port with an aim to create awareness about the strike demanding a lasting solution to the concerns of the coastal community. The concluding function was inaugurated by senior lawyer and activist Prashant Bhushan.

The Latin Archdiocese has also decided to intensify the protests from Monday by holding a 24-hour indefinite strike at the protest venue, raising the demand of halting the port construction which, according to it, aggravated coastal erosion, displacing hundreds of families."

Kerala: Fisherman hit by bullet near Naval base: Fishers' union writes to PM for probe

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-fisherman-hit-bullet-near-naval-base-fishers-union-writes-pm-probe-167874

"The Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi Trade Union Centre of India (TUCI), a fishermen union, has urged the union government to inquire into the incident of a fisherman who got hit by a bullet near the naval training school in Kochi. In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi dated September 13, the fishermen union has asked the union government to find out who is responsible for this incident and to take action. The letter also mentioned that the naval authorities were repeatedly denying the fishermen union's allegation on the incident.

The incident happened when the fishing canoe, in which he worked, was crossing the Indian Naval Ship (INS) Dronacharya to reach the shore on September 7, near Fort Kochi in Kerala's Ernakulam district. On September 7, a traditionally modified canoe, Al-Rehman I, was returning to the harbour after fishing. When the canoe was about 1.5 km away from reaching the harbour, a bullet grazed and hit the 70-year-old fisherman Sebastian on his ear and he fell. Later, the Alleppey native was admitted to a local hospital in Fort Kochi where he got five stitches on his ear.

The other fishermen who accompanied Sebastian told the media that they saw his ear was bleeding when Sebastian suddenly fell down. They also found a bullet in the boat close to him. According to them, usually the Navy would inform those venturing into the sea about the armed training sessions, however, this time there was no intimation.

According to the Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi, the bullet came from INS Dronacharya. Officials from both the Indian Navy as well as the Kerala police visited Sebastian in hospital. Meanwhile, the bullet was handed over to police officials for further investigation.

Initially, the Navy authorities said they would cooperate with the investigation. But now they are not cooperating and are denying that the bullet came from the naval training centre. ""Initially, the navy had agreed to cooperate with the investigation but now they are in denial. There is no other source for a bullet to originate from in that area. We will try our best to find out what happened,"" Charles George, state president of Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi, told TNM."

Kerala: Conveys to Centre apprehensions on draft guidelines for deep-sea fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-conveys-to-centre-apprehensions-on-draft-guidelines-for-deep-sea-fishing/article65887411.ece?

Kerala has conveyed its apprehensions regarding the new draft guidelines issued for Indian vessels engaged in deep-sea fishing to the Union government, said Fisheries Minister V. Abdurahiman on Tuesday. A high-level committee has been formed to investigate how the new guidelines will affect the fisheries sector in the State, the Minister said.

The committee was appointed to study the guidelines in the wake of reports that these would adversely affect the livelihood of traditional fishermen. The panel will submit its report in a week. Based on the report, detailed recommendations will be submitted to the Centre for making necessary amendments to the new guidelines, said Mr. Abdurahiman.

The Minister also asked the Union Government to hold discussions with the Fisheries Ministers of other States and labour outfits before taking a final decision. Emphasising the need for traditional fishermen to work safely and freely, the Minister stressed that Kerala will make every effort to avoid proposals that will harm the fishermen. The new draft notification has provisions for obtaining mandatory permits from authorities to engage in deep-sea fishing, among other things.

Kerala: 66 villages in Kerala to receive relaxations under CRZ regulations

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/66-villages-in-kerala-to-receive-relaxations-in-crz-regulations-1.7843319

"In a major relief for fishing communities in Kerala, the central government agreed to relax CRZ regulations for 66 villages in eight districts falling under Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ). Coastal Management Authority agreed to the demands tabled by the Kerala government in a meeting earlier this week. Currently, these villages fall in the third category of CRZ areas (CR III), which places restrictions on natives in undertaking construction works in these areas.

The meeting agreed to change the category from CRZ III to CRZ II and relax restrictions in these areas. In CRZ-II, there is no such restriction for undertaking construction work.

Since 2011, Kerala has been demanding that 175 panchayats in the CRZ III category be transferred to the second category. Following this, the demand was agreed to change 66 panchayats in Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kannur, Kasaragod, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Thiruvananthapuram and Thrissur districts.

However, the central government has set some conditions for this change. A disaster management authority plan should be introduced in all 66 panchayats. Meanwhile, Panchayats surveyed and identified as having mineral deposits by the Department of Atomic Energy will not be allowed to be shifted from CRZ-3 to CRZ-2.

As per the rules laid down in the Coastal Management Act, 2011, restrictions have been imposed in CRZ categories one to four."

Kerala: Two dead as fishing boat capsizes off Muthalappozhi harbour

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/two-dead-as-fishing-boat-capsizes-off-muthalappozhi-harbour-in-thiruvananthapuram/article65854499.ece

"Two fishermen were killed and three others are feared missing in the sea after a fishing boat capsized off Muthalappozhi in the district on Monday afternoon. The deceased have been identified as Shanavas and Nizamudeen. Two of the missing are the sons of the owner of the boat.

The boat, Safa Marwa, carried a crew of 23, all of them hailing from Varkala. Seven men were rescued by a Coastal Police vessel, while 11 others were rescued by fishing boats which were close by, according to the Anchuthengu Coastal Police unit. The accident occurred when the boat was returning to the Muthalappozhi fishing harbour, according to the police.

Initially, confusion prevailed over the actual crew strength and the number of missing persons. Rescue operations were hampered by bad weather in the region. Strong winds and rain had turned the coastal waters rough. After an alarm was raised, the Coast Guard's Vizhinjam unit rushed two interceptor boats and a coastal patrol vessel to the region to aid the rescue effort, but bad weather and failing light made the search difficult. Two boats of the Coastal Police and the Marine Enforcement were continuing search near the harbour mouth late into Monday night.

The Coast Guard ship ICGS Samar and a helicopter from Kochi are expected to join the search on Tuesday, a defence spokesperson said. It was suspected that the missing men got entangled

in the boat's fishing net which had snagged on the groyne. Late on Monday evening, a crane was brought to the site to try and drag up the net. Meanwhile, local fishermen blockaded the Anchuthengu police station, blaming the administration for an alleged delay in launching search and rescue.

In recent years, the choppy waters off Muthalappozhi have developed into a danger zone for fishing boats. The fishing communities blame the unscientific design of the groynes at the Muthalappozhi harbour mouth for the situation. The region has claimed numerous lives, setting off a clamour for urgent government action. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said rescue efforts have been intensified to trace the missing men."

Kerala: Climate vagaries to blame for coastal erosion

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/climate-vagaries-to-blame-for-coastal-erosion-studies-vizhinjam-port-kerala/article65810849.ece

"Most studies held prior to the port works and after point to climate change induced cyclonic systems and unscientific structures built to check sea erosion as the major reasons for the aggravated sea erosion. But fishermen, citing the works for the worsening situation, has called for a scientific study after stopping construction to assess the damage the protest against the Vizhinjam international seaport in Thiruvananthapuram by fishermen and their families has reached a feverish pitch with the agitating fishers trying to lay siege to the under-construction port at sea and on land.

The round-the-clock protest led by the Latin Catholic Archdiocese, Thiruvananthapuram, does not seem to be ending soon what with the protesters insisting that any compromise other than halting the multi-crore port work, the first phase of which is about to be commissioned next year, cannot be agreed upon. Their main demand is that the port construction should be stopped straightaway to take stock of the damage caused by the construction along the coast of Thiruvananthapuram.

Coastal erosion in Kerala

The coastline of Kerala has been witnessing constant erosion in varying degrees due to seasonal changes in waves triggered by monsoons. This gets aggravated if there are cyclonic weather systems over the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The cyclonic systems will normally leave a long-term impact on the overall beach morphology. If there are any hard structures such as groynes, seawalls, or breakwaters constructed unscientifically, the morphological impact on its adjacent coastal region will be more severe.

Shaji E., Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Geology, University of Kerala, who headed a study on coastal erosion, coastal accretion, and shoreline changes (from 2006 to 2020) along the 58-km coastal stretch between Pozhiyoor and Anchuthengu in Thiruvananthapuram, says an increase in the number of cyclones over the Arabian Sea is one of the main reasons for the rise in shoreline changes along the southern coast.

However, the striking fishermen are not ready to buy the argument. "It is a known fact that the coast of Thiruvananthapuram is highly eroding even before the port construction. Normally, port activities are prohibited on eroding coast as any structure will only aggravate sea erosion. Disregarding these facts, the authorities went head with the work. Further, many scientific studies have earlier proved that coastal erosion is man-made. Even as everyone accepts the fact that coastal erosion has intensified along the coast of capital in recent years, the authorities are not ready to hold a scientific study stopping the port construction. It is against this backdrop the fishermen decided to stall the port construction until their legitimate demands are met," says Joseph Vijayan, spokesperson of Coastal Watch, an outfit which works for the causes of fishermen, Thiruvananthapuram.

The social worker and local activist has fought a case in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) against the port project

NGT's expert committee

When environmental clearance (EC) for the project was challenged in the NGT, it appointed an expert committee and a cell to monitor the shoreline changes in the project area — within 10 km on either side. These committees have been monitoring shoreline changes along a 20-km stretch (Instead of the mandatory 10 km) on either side of the port every six months and filing reports. Contrary to the argument of the fishermen and the Latin Archdiocese, none of these reports endorses any form of coastal erosion due to port construction.

Coastal erosion in Kerala is not limited to Thiruvananthapuram alone. Valiyathura and Shangumugham beaches are the most erosion-hit areas about 13-15 km north of the port site. However, there is no major accretion or erosion in Adimalathura, Pulluvila, and Poovar regions on the south side. Port development is likely to cause minor accretion for about 2.6 km to the south of the port, the maximum rate being 21.6 m per year which will reduce to 0.6 m per year by the tenth year and will stabilise thereafter, according to studies carried out by L&T-Ramboll Consulting Engineers Limited in connection with the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Climate research and data

A reference manual on Climate Change Adaptation Guidelines for Coastal Protection and Management in India prepared by the Asian Development Bank for the Ministry of Water Resources, and published in 2019, notes that the Valiathura is typical of a tropical coast which has waves as the predominant hydrodynamic force controlling the coastal processes.

The data available with the National Institute of Ocean Technology say that during the Ockhi cyclone, the maximum wave height along the coast had touched 7.29 metre. The highest maximum wave height was recorded during the time of cyclone Tauktae in 2020 at 9.44 metre.

There is a constant longshore sediment transport along the coast of Kerala that indicates the transport, or drift, of beach material caused principally by the action of waves and tidal currents. When there is high wave activity induced by cyclones, depression or low pressure during monsoon, a large portion of the beach will be gnawed away by the waves. This has become a regular feature on the Kerala coast.

Existing studies' findings

The proposed Vizhinjam port is being constructed inside a 'sediment cell,' which is a pocket-like area in which interruptions to the movement of sand along the coast do not significantly affect the adjacent length of coastline. Further, it has been found that shoreline changes are negligible to the north of the proposed port even after the complete phase of development, according to the L&T study.

In addition, around five-km north of the port site are rocky headlands and pocket beaches where the rate of sediment movement along the coast is significantly low , says the study. Several other studies had reported the high erosion zones along the coast of Thiruvananthapuram. The Department of Ocean Engineering, IIT, Madras, in a report to the government in 2007, stated that Beemapally and Shangumugam stretches were under constant threat during high wave seasons.

Unscientific construction of seawalls

Applications Centre in 2014 has also found Valiyathura and Poonthura coastal areas vulnerable to high-intensity erosion. This is mainly due to the unscientific construction of seawalls and groynes in the south of Valiyathura to check erosion, says the ADB report. There has been no proper impact assessment preceding the construction of coastal structures at many places, says a senior officer at Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited (VISL). The unscientific construction of a breakwater at Muthalapozhi is an example where scores of fishermen have

lost their lives, where sand bypassing is urgently required to mitigate the problem, he says.

"Coastal erosion is a reality and the rate of erosion has increased recently, especially after Ockhi. It is not right to club erosion with port construction as there are permanent mechanisms to monitor the shoreline changes due to construction. Perhaps this is the only port project in India that began after completing all comprehensive studies to address all impact with a high level of stakeholder participation," says VISL CEO Jayakumar."

Kerala: Fishers told to switch to petrol or diesel engines

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-told-to-switch-to-petrol-or-diesel-engines/article65802232.ece

"Traditional fishing boats might have to switch to engines which run on petrol or diesel, now that the Centre has refused to allocate more kerosene for the State, Minister for Sports, Wakf and Haj Pilgrimage V. Abdurahiman has said.

Replying to a calling attention motion by P.P.. Chitharanjan on the hardships faced by traditional fishers because of the shortage of kerosene and the need to rehabilitate families living along the coast, Mr. Abdurahiman said that a meeting of fishermen and trade unions would be called soon to discuss the issue of switching from kerosene to petrol or diesel as fuel for fishing boats.

The Centre had been apprised of the difficulties faced by the fishermen because of the non-availability of kerosene. The State was facing severe sea erosion at 50 locations. The State government was implementing Punargeham, a rehabilitation scheme for fishermen whose homes were just 50 meter from the high tide line, at ₹2,450 crore.

The government reckons that 21,000 families would have to be rehabilitated. None would be forcefully removed. A total of 8,375 families had volunteered to move away from the coast and for them flat complexes had been proposed in nine locations, Mr. Abdurahiman said."

Kerala: Seeks ₹2400 crore Central aid for coastal protection

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-seeks-2400-crore-central-aid-for-coastal-protection/article65779309.ece

"The State has sought ₹2,400 crore financial assistance from the Centre for coastal protection works, Minister for Fisheries V. Abdurahiman has said. Mr. Abdurahiman, after meeting the Union Minister for Fisheries and Animal Husbandry, Parshottam Rupala, in New Delhi on Wednesday, said that the Union Minister had assured that a favourable decision could be expected on the matter.

Financial assistance was sought for planning novel methods for protecting the coastal stretches from erosion and to adopt urgent measures for the protection of hotspots identified in eight coastal districts, the Minister said. With coastal erosion emerging as a major challenge in recent years, the State government had earlier announced coastal conservation measures estimated at roughly ₹5,300 crore over the next five years.

During his meeting with Mr. Rupala, Mr. Abdurahiman also urged the Centre to release its 50% share for the Savings-Cum-Relief Schemes (SCRS) meant for traditional fishermen. This is the only scheme aimed at the welfare of fishers during the trawling ban and periods of distress. Kerala has sought ₹72.75 crore as the Central share for the 2018-19 to 2021-22 period and ₹26.36 crore for the 2022-23 period for SCRS. Mr. Abdurahiman also pointed out that the shortage of kerosene was creating hardships for fishers who used it as fuel in the outboard engines in fishing craft. There were around 36,000 outboard engine-rigged fishing boats registered in Kerala, according to the Minister."

Kerala: Exploited by middlemen, fishermen seek govt intervention

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/aug/18/exploited-by-middlemen-kerala-fishermen-seek-govt-intervention-2488597.html

"They brave rough seas and high winds to earn a living. But the lives of traditional fishermen have always been a pursuit of the elusive. They risk their lives to make ends meet but end up making others rich.“Traditional fishermen have become bonded labourers,” says Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation Ernakulam district president Shiji Thayyil.

While a group of fishermen may take a loan and raise `40 lakh to buy a country boat, the auctioneer or Tharakan will lend `3 to 5 lakh and reserve the exclusive right to auction the fish, Shiji says. “The auctioneer will take a commission of 10 per cent of which two per cent will be kept aside for the payment of bonus during the festival season. They purchase the catch at low rates and sell it to marketing agents at a higher rate. The fruits of the fishermen’s labour are reaped by these middlemen.”

On August 10, the fishermen at Chellanam harbour united and raised their voice against the exploitation by auctioneers. But the protest didn’t make an impact as the government turned a blind eye. That day, the fishermen got a good catch of large oil sardines which are in high demand in the Kerala market. However, the maximum amount quoted by the auctioneers was `50 per kg. The same fish was sold to traders at the rate of `200 per kg and was sold in the retail market a few kilometres away from the harbour at the rate of `300 per kg.

"There is an unholy nexus between the auctioneers and the traders. They make profits five times of what the fishermen earn. The government should intervene and ensure a minimum support price for fish," demands Shiji.The state government had introduced a mechanism to fix the price of fish at harbours during the lockdown period. The harbour management committees -- with officials from the fisheries department and the Matsyafed representing the government -- were empowered to fix the minimum price.

The fishermen demand the system, which was beneficial to them, be made permanent to end exploitation. "The price of kerosene, used as fuel by country boats, has reached `145 per litre and each boat needs at least 150 litres per day. The civil supplies department and the Matsyafed have stopped giving subsidy for kerosene. Each boat will have 10 to 25 fishermen in it. If we get a catch of `60,000, each fisherman will get `500. How can we support our families with such a meagre income?" asks Saji, a fisherman.

As there is no fishing harbour in Alappuzha district, fishermen from Kattoor, Arthungal and Chethi coastal villages depend on Vypeen and Chellanam harbours in Ernakulam district. They transport the boats to Ernakulam by trucks, adding to their expenses."Around 200 boats operate from Chellanam and we don't have the facility to handle the huge quantity of fish brought to the harbour. This provides the auctioneers an opportunity to bargain and reduce the price of fish," Saji says.

Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi president Charles George echoes the sentiment. "On some occasions, the fishermen may get a bumper catch which reduces the fish price. The government should establish cold storage facilities at harbours and the Matsyafed should intervene and purchase some quantity of fish to stop price crash," he says.

Meanwhile, fisheries department central zone joint director M S Saju says the government had issued 'The Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Maintenance of Quality Ordinance' in 2021 to regulate fish auctioning and marketing and to promote systematic, hygienic and effective handling of fish. "A new Act with provisions to control the intervention of auctioneers and traders will be introduced soon," Saju says.

Kerala: Sardines return to Kerala coast, but juvenile fishing threatens survival

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/aug/19/sardines-return-to-kerala-coast-but-juvenile-fishing-threatens-survival-2488998.html

"On a steep decline since 2014, oil sardines have returned to the state's coast. Huge shoals of oil sardine have been found in the state's coastline since July, at a time when Kerala was dreading the disappearance of its staple fish variety. However, experts have warned against indiscriminate juvenile fishing of the species as it may diminish hopes of its regeneration. As per reports, fishermen across the state caught juvenile oil sardines in huge quantities in the past two months. This, experts said, threatened to deplete their numbers.

While mechanised boat owners blamed traditional fishermen for the destructive fishing practice, the latter alleged trawl boats employing pair trawling practice were catching juvenile fish in large quantities. In 2012, fishermen in the state caught 3.9 lakh tonnes of oil sardines. The number plummeted to just 3,297 tonnes in 2021.

Though the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) issued an alert to the fisheries department urging it to intensify surprise checks and strictly implement the minimum legal size (MLS), the department was late to respond.

Outfit for strict checking, hefty fines for juvenile fishing

"I had written to the fisheries director last month seeking a ban on fishing for two weeks to allow the species time to grow. There was no response. The request was made keeping interests of fishermen in mind as they can earn ten times more profit if they let the fish grow," said CMFRI former principal scientist K Sunil Mohamed. He said traditional fishermen are exempted from the trawling ban implemented during the June-July period.

"The fishermen use sonar to scan fish shoals and can check their size before casting nets. We had issued an advisory to the fisheries department in July to regulate juvenile fishing. Huge quantities of juvenile oil sardines were caught in the past two months and a major chunk was sent to other states," said CMFRI principal scientist E M Abdussamad.

While leaders of fishermen union maintained they had educated fishermen about the pitfalls of juvenile fishing, sources said 20 truckloads of juvenile fish are being transported to fish meal factories every day from Chellanam harbour alone. On its part, the fisheries department has been taking those indulging in juvenile fishing to task. Last week, it had slapped a fine on the owner of a country boat at Chellanam harbour.

"We have been inspecting fishing vessels at random and penalising boats that catch juvenile

fish. A few days ago, a country boat was seized with 10 tonnes of juvenile oil sardines in Thrissur. It is good news that the species has returned. If we wait two months, the fish will get bigger and bring better returns for fishermen," said fisheries department joint director (central zone) M S Saju.

Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi president Charles George said the government should deploy officers at all landing centres to check the catch. "Hefty fines should be imposed on those involved in juvenile fishing.

Trucks transporting fish to fish meal factories should be checked and fined if found flouting norms," he said. Sunil Mohamed said catching fully-grown oil sardines in abundance is not an issue as the species has high reproductive potential. "It regenerates in 7-8 year cycles. Its present abundance in the state's coast may be an indication of regeneration. We have to self-regulate to sustain the fish," he said.

Minimum Legal Size

Minimum legal size (MLS) is 10cm for oil sardines and 14cm for Indian mackerel. Experts opine the MLS of oil sardines should be raised to 14cm"

Kerala: Fisherfolk begin next phase of protest against Vizhinjam port

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/fisherfolk-begin-next-phase-of-protest-against-vizhinjam-port-thiruvananthapuram-latin-archdiocese-1.7789349

"The fisherfolk led by the Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum has begun the fourth phase of protest against the Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited on Tuesday. The workers will picket the main gate of the port. All churches under the Archdiocese hoisted black flags to mark the protest. The fisherfolk has done massive planning in organising the protest.

People from each cathedral will participate on selected days till 31st of this month. The organisers hope it will be the biggest movements against the Vizhinjam project so far. Archdiocese vicar general Fr Eugene Pereira alleged that the agreements made to construct the port were fraudulent. Though it was signed during the UDF regime, the present government is not probing it, he said.

The fisherfolk are facing several grave issues in the state. Promises are not being met. Nothing is happening other than praising them as the 'army of Kerala', he said. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan had described the fishermen as 'our own army' while recognising the rescue efforts of the fishers during the 2018 floods. Father added that the government must talk to the protestors

and give ears to their demands."

Kerala: Fisherfolk stir outside Vizhinjam port intensifies; Kerala govt says housing issue to be resolved soon

https://theprint.in/india/fisherfolk-stir-outside-vizhinjam-port-intensifies-kerala-govt-says-housing-issue-to-be-resolved-soon/1084580/

"As the fisherfolk's protest against alleged neglect of their demands by the Kerala government intensified outside the under construction Vizhinjam port, state Transport Minister Antony Raju said steps were being taken to allocate land for constructing flats for those who lost their homes to the sea.

Raju said that one of the main problems being faced by a large section of the fishing community was the loss of their homes to the sea and to address that directions have been issued to allocate land by August 22 for construction of flats for them. The objective is to provide homes without any further delay, he said while speaking to reporters here.

He also said that when the fishermen had staged protests outside the Secretariat here, the government had indicated its willingness to hold discussions with them to address their concerns. "Actually they (fisherfolk) are facing various problems which need to be addressed in a time bound manner. In the coming days, the government will take a final decision on ensuring housing for those who lost their homes," the minister said.

On stopping the port construction, which is one of the demands of the protesters, Raju said the state government cannot take such a decision on its own as the Centre is also involved in the project regarding which orders were also issued by the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal. Meanwhile, the protest outside the port intensified with a huge number of protesters, primarily youngsters, arriving there wearing black clothes and carrying black flags.

One of the priests leading the protest, while speaking at the protest site, said the day was being considered as 'black day'. Protesters were seen trying to push away some of the barricades set up by the police several meters outside the port's main entrance, but it did not lead anywhere.

A large number of police personnel were deployed outside the port in the morning in anticipation of the protest. Earlier in the day, Monsignor Eugine H Pereira of the Latin Archdiocese told media that the fourth phase of the protest was being held with the slogan 'Vizhinjam chalo'. Black flags were hoisted on churches of the Latin Archdiocese in the state capital and a bike rally to the port's main entrance was also held.

The priest said the protest was not just confined to the problems being faced by members of the fishing community in Thiruvananthapuram, as those in Kollam, Alappuzha, Kochi and other coastal areas were also facing various issues, including coastal erosion. Successive governments made various promises and announced several relief packages and projects, but either they were not properly implemented or in some places nothing happened at the ground level, the priest claimed.

He alleged that the successive governments were more interested in taking the port project forward rather than listening to what the fisherfolk had to say. He also alleged that the contract with the Adani group for construction of the Vizhinjam port was a “fraud”.

Another priest of the Latin Archdiocese told reporters that the agitation was against the government’s “arrogant belief” that they can do anything in the name of development without taking into account the plight or suffering of a section of society. The protesters have been alleging that the unscientific construction of groynes, the artificial sea walls known as “pulimutt’ in local parlance, as part of the upcoming Vizhinjam port was one of the reasons for the increasing coastal erosion in the district. Last week, hundreds of fisherfolk had taken out a massive protest rally in the state capital and laid siege to the Secretariat here with boats and fishing nets, alleging that the Left government was neglecting their demands."

Kerala: Massive protest by fishermen brings Capital to a standstill

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/aug/11/massive-protest-by-fishermen-brings-capital-to-a-standstill-2486273.html

"Hundreds of fisherfolk on Wednesday took out a massive protest in the capital and laid siege to the Secretariat with boats and fishing nets, seeking urgent intervention of the state government into various issues including coastal erosion in the district. The march, which saw protesters raising slogans against the government that it neglected their demands, brought the city to a standstill for several hours.

The Latin Archdiocese supported the protest march of fishermen from several coastal areas in the district against the coastal erosion that occurred owing to construction of Vizhinjam port. City traffic went haywire as the agitators brought fishing boats on trucks to various places, including Thiruvallam, Pettah, General Hospital Junction, and Enchakkal on NH 66 bypass junction. Members of the fishing community, including women, who came from different coastal hamlets in the area, were led by a group of priests. They stopped major city routes for hours while raising slogans against the government.

When the police attempted to prevent demonstrators from moving ahead at Shankumukham,

Enchakkal, Pettah, and General Hospital, tension prevailed throughout the city for hours.When the motor vehicles department employees attempted to forbid the fishermen from transporting sizable boats that were attached to vehicles, the fishermen reacted angrily in a number of places. The police and fisherman reportedly got into a small altercation. Police said that the fishermen were not permitted to protest with boats, and they did not seek authorisation from the police in advance for the Secretariat march. Later on, though, the cops had to let them go.

Fishermen then marched with their boats from the Museum to the Secretariat. Then, the women and fishermen surrounded the Secretariat on MG Road. This led to traffic chaos in Palayam, East Fort, and Vellayambalam. Several motorists had to rely on byroads to reach their destinations. The police had blocked one side of MG Road from 11 am as a precaution. But for over four hours, the protesters besieged the area, blocking the entire route. All prominent priests of the Latin Archdiocese, including former Archbishop Soosapakiam, came to the protest venue to express solidarity with the agitators.

The coastal residents raised demands such as solving the coastal erosion allegedly due to the construction of the Vizhinjam port, ensuring rehabilitation of those who lost their jobs due to the port project, ensuring safety in places where there is constant danger, and reducing the price of kerosene for fishermen. As coastline erosion worsens during monsoon and more homes are lost, they sought a long-term solution to the issue. Additionally, they claimed that the government had not yet given them any assurances.

In Kerala, kerosene costs Rs 125 per litre, up from Rs 25 in Tamil Nadu. According to the protesters, this is having an impact on fishermen's lives. The protesters urged that the development of the Vizhinjam port be halted until a thorough study is conducted. The government, according to a woman protestor, is doing nothing to address the serious coastline erosion that has been occurring for years. According to them, 500 homes had been lost in several coastal hamlets, and the government needed to act quickly to assist families that had lost their houses.

Another fisherman claimed that hundreds of families, including his own, have spent the previous four years living in government godowns because strong waves and coastal erosion had wrecked their houses. He added that the protest was a token one and it would be intensified if the government did not respond to the requests of the fishermen."

Kerala: DPR to develop Chellanam into model fishing village submitted

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/dpr-to-develop-chellanam-into-model-fishing-village-submitted/article65732448.ece

"A final detailed project report (DPR) for a ₹941-crore scheme to develop Chellanam into a model, eco-friendly fishing village has been submitted to the State government by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) and Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC).

Chellanam, which has a total of 8,680 households, is among the worst-affected in the State due to frequent flooding. It is also one of the most populated grama panchayats and has double the population density of Kerala, at 860 persons per sq. km. Many houses do not have toilets while waste disposal remains a serious issue.

The ₹941-crore scheme can be implemented in two to three years' time. The DPR was handed over to Fisheries Director Adila Abdulla in the presence of Industries Minister P. Rajeeve and Fisheries Minister V. Abdurahiman, by KSCADC Managing Director P.I. Sheik Pareeth and KUFOS Vice Chancellor K. Riji John, here on Friday. The government has earmarked a total of ₹5,400 crore to rebuild vulnerable portions of the State's coastline. Of the ₹941-crore scheme, a sum of ₹520 crore has already been allotted for Chellanam by different departments, says a release."

Kerala: Governmet told to tackle 'pair trawling'

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/govt-told-to-tackle-pair-trawling/article65703603.ece

"With the annual trawling ban ending on Sunday night, the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation has called for urgent measures to tackle the destructive practice of 'pair trawling'. Traditional fishers are worried that large trawlers are likely to employ 'pair trawling' to harvest juvenile fish that are now seen in abundance in the sea, State president Jackson Pollayil said.

Patrolling should be strengthened at harbours and at sea to impound nets used for this practice which spells doom for several fish species, he said. The practice, which uses two boats and a big net to sweep the sea, traps huge quantities of young pelagic fish, according to the federation.

After a long gap, schools of young mackerel, sardine, and other fishes are being reported in the sea. But once the trawlers are out after the ban, they are likely to catch them using banned nets, which could impact the livelihood of traditional fishers, Mr. Pollayil alleged.

Unless steps are taken, the federation will be forced to launch agitations including blockading trawlers at sea, the federation said in a statement. The federation has urged the government to

extend the trawling ban to 90 days from next year onwards and not to issue fresh licences to fishing vessels."

Kerala: The State government was committed to adopting special welfare policies to improve the standard of living of fishermen https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/govt-committed-to-adopt-special-welfare-policies-for-fishers-says-cm/article65693628.ece "Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the State government was committed to adopting special welfare policies to improve the standard of living of fishermen in Kerala. Opening the newly completed facilities such as two finger jetties and locker rooms at Puthiyappa harbour in Kozhikode city, Mr. Vijayan said the government was keen on addressing welfare issues of fishers and upgrading facilities at small harbours.

“It was in 1982 that the Puthiyappa harbour was commissioned to facilitate the operation of 250 fishing boats. The latest renovation and additions were done considering the improved requirements in the area,” said Mr. Vijayan. According to him, the new finger jetties constructed at a cost of ₹11 crore under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana with 40% State government contribution were meant for offering a better ground for fishing boat operations.

Mr. Vijayan also pointed out that the completion of a secure compound wall and the construction of 27 locker rooms were the other two major achievements for which ₹2.15 crore, sanctioned by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, was spent. “There is a good approach road now for the movement of vehicles. All these new facilities are sure to help about 4,000 fishermen and allied workers associated with the harbour,” he added.

While listing out the special projects that had brought in commendable changes and facility upgrade in fishing harbours across the State, Mr. Vijayan said the Left Democratic Front-led government managed to execute the renovation of 154 coastal roads in the State in its second term alone. “During the first tenure, the renovation work of 1,325 roads was completed on time. Work is still progressing in many locations,” he said.

Fisheries department officials said it was for the first time that two such spacious finger jetties designed like piers were being realised in the State with an aim to facilitate the safe and convenient anchoring of fishing boats. The overcrowded space at the Puthiyappa harbour was creating hurdles for fishing boat operators who had been waiting for a scientific solution for several years. Forest Minister A.K. Saseendran delivered the keynote address at the inaugural event. Mayor Beena Philip, Fisheries Director Adeela Abdulla and people’s representatives were present at the venue."

Kerala: Fishermen held in Qatar return home

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/jul/29/fishermen-held-in-qatar-return-home-2481728.html

"Three of the six Malayali fishermen, who were arrested by the police in Qatar for straying into the country's territorial waters and later released, returned to the state on Thursday. Vijayan Christopher, 36, and Arun, 22, from Poonthura and Michael Selvadasan, 34, from Adimalathura reached Thiruvananthapuram airport at 5.40pm. The Malayali fishermen were arrested by the Qatar police after the fishing vessel drifted into the country's territorial waters on June 3.

The fishermen landed in Iran on December 19 last year. Norka department was in constant touch with the Indian embassies in Qatar and Iran to secure the fishermen's release. They reached Mumbai on Thursday morning and later boarded a flight to Thiruvananthapuram. Of the three other fishermen, two – Ratheesh and Selvam – had reached the state two days ago. Basil, the only remaining fisherman in Qatar, has contracted Covid and will return after the quarantine period. All three are from Poonthura."

Kerala: Fishers plan to boycott Kalamukku fish landing centre

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-plan-to-boycott-kalamukku-fish-landing-centre/article65658167.ece

"Owners of around a hundred traditional small boats and 500 larger traditional vessels have said they will begin a boycott of the Kalamukku fish landing centre as it reportedly lacked facilities and had space constraints. N.A. Jain, secretary of the independent fishers' union Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, said though there was a roof over the fish landing centre, the demand for a proper road to access it and to increase the space available had not been considered so far.

He said fishers' unions had been calling for proper facilities to help fish landing operations as well as auction and transport of the catch over the last decade, but the demands had fallen on deaf ears.

Mr. Jain said the waters near the centre needed to be dredged to help larger traditional boats reach the harbour. Losses of fishing equipment were also reported at the harbour due to a lack of security in the area. The lack of a ramp from the fishing boats to the centre had caused a large number of accidents in the past, he added.

Charles George of the Aikya Vedhi said the fishers had demanded the setting up of a 100-

metre-long and 400-metre-wide harbour with facilities for the fish landing centre. He said the government could acquire sufficient land for building the facilities to support traditional fishers. The annual trawling ban would end on July 31 and building the facilities for traditional boats would help fishers who were facing a fish drought-like situation, he said."

Kerala: How climate change is destroying fishing livelihoods

https://www.indiatoday.in/india-today-insight/story/how-climate-change-is-destroying-fishing-livelihoods-in-kerala-1977330-2022-07-19

"Gloomy days are gripping Kerala's coastline with fishing communities struggling to cope up with the backlash of global warming on their livelihoods. Dwindling fish catch—confirmed recently again by the findings of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)—is driving many fishermen to hard days. Findings of the Kochi-based CMFRI suggest that the catch of Kerala's famous oil sardines dropped by 75 per cent in 2021 as against the previous year.

Plummeting fish catch is proving to be disastrous for the state's fishing community. "Most of us (fishermen) are in a debt trap as we are losing work-days due to severe storms and dwindling fish catch. Earlier, we could work at least four days a week during the monsoon and manage our lives. Now, we don't work even two days in a week and even if we do, the fish catch is limited. On some days, we have to return without catching any fish," says Hilary Benjamin, a fisherman from Valiathura in Thiruvananthapuram.

Benjamin, 45, who has been living on the coast since he was 14, has a five-member family to care for. "The sea looked after us for all these years. We have been living at her mercy and by the grace of God managed our lives well. Now, we are sit idle—without work or any fish catch," he says.

Kerala has a 590-km-long coastline and over a million fisherfolk, who reside in 222 villages along the coast, spread over nine of the state's 14 districts. Around 50,000 vendors across the state earn their livelihood through fisheries allied activities. "Since Cyclone Ockhi in November 2017, the ecosystem of the Arabian Sea has changed. The abundant common species of fish started vanishing," says John Sahayamary, a 65-year-old fisherman from Vizhinjam, Thiruvananthapuram. He attributes the problem partly to changes fish breeding patterns and high levels of pollution from dumping of plastic in the sea.

The CMFRI's research confirms the apprehensions of fishermen. The research found that the sea was warming up, and changes in the sea current and drastic changes in the ecosystem were causing the fish catch to fall.

A dwindling fish catch means prices of fish shooting up, upsetting household budgets. “Kerala’s most popular fish, the Indian oil sardine, is missing from the common man’s food table,” says P.P Thobias, a celebrated football player of Kerala. “Sardines have become most expensive, costing Rs 300 or more per kilo as against under Rs 100 earlier. Even fisherfolk cannot afford them.”

Thobias, 57, who represented Kerala in the Santosh Trophy for eight consecutive years, feels the high prices of sardine and tapioca threaten to derail Kerala’s food security. “Kappa (tapioca) with sardine curry is the common man’s staple during the monsoon. The combo helps the poor remain healthy and used to be affordable in the past,” he says.

According to CMFRI, oil sardine catch in Kerala in 2021 was about 3,297 tonnes, the lowest since 1994. This even as Kerala improved its position in terms of fish landings, from fourth in 2020 to third last year. At 65,326 tonnes, the lesser sardines topped the list of fish landings in the state, followed by the Indian mackerel (56,029 tonnes) and scad (53,525 tonnes). Not only oil sardines, silver bellies and black pomfret catch also declined in 2021 compared to the previous year.

According T.M. Najmudeen, principal scientist at CMFRI, catching of juvenile fish and drastic changes in the marine ecosystem have contributed for the severe drop. “Our study revealed a 117 per cent rise in juvenile fishing in 2021 in Kerala. The practice can be disastrous for fishermen and also result in revenue losses for the government,” he said."

Kerala: On India’s Arabian Sea coast, villages pay brutal price of ‘stolen’ shoreline

https://www.arabnews.com/node/2125251/world

"When the sea destroyed her home, Mary Joseph had to move to a warehouse, a shelter that she and her children now share with more than 20 other families displaced by coastal erosion in Valiyathura, a former port area of Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala state. The rising sea levels in the state that spans almost 600 kilometers on the southwestern coast of the Indian subcontinent is one of the reasons that people are losing their houses and livelihoods, but climate change is not the only culprit.

In Trivandrum, more than 20 percent of the city’s Arabian Sea coastline is affected by erosion, much of it caused by artificial seawalls and riprap revetments protecting infrastructure projects, according to local government data. Hundreds of fishing families from Valiyathura and about a

dozen other neighboring villages have been forced to abandon their houses in the past few years. “It’s terrible living here where you don’t have any privacy,” Joseph, who has two teenage children, told Arab News.

“Life in the warehouse has not only dehumanized us, but has also brought health problems, with many of us suffering from respiratory problems because this building used to store cement earlier.” Since May, the displaced villagers and civil society groups have been protesting a multibillion-dollar seaport project built in nearby Vizhinjam, which they say has deprived local communities of homes by increasing sea levels at a pace much faster than climate change.

The Adani Vizhinjam port and container transshipment facility, developed in a public-private partnership since 2016, has already affected about 200,000 people and the number is increasing, according to Trivandrum-based environmentalist A. J. Vijayan.

“We have seen that every year at least 100 houses are getting lost after the port project started,” Vijayan told Arab News. He estimates that more than 650 families have since moved to temporary shelters in nearby schools and warehouses. Vijayan is one of the organizers of the protest to stop the development and compensate the fishermen who have lost their lands.

“For land and housing, they should be adequately compensated,” he said, adding that protesters also want the local government to restore the eroded coastline that provided livelihoods to those dependent on it. “Stolen Shorelines,” a documentary film by K. A. Shaji, a journalist from Kerala, shows how development projects in Trivandrum are pushing coastal communities into homelessness and poverty.

“The coastal region of Kerala is facing massive sea erosion. Massive sea erosion is visible in Trivandrum and the surrounding areas for the last four and five years, and now it has escalated to alarming levels,” Shaji told Arab News. “At one level climate change is a villain. On the other level there are many contributing factors that are aggravating the crisis created by climate change.” The local government has policies to rehabilitate displaced communities.

“We are giving 10 lakhs rupees ($12,600) of which six lakhs is for buying land and four lakhs for building houses,” Sheeja Mary, deputy director of the Kerala Department of Fisheries, told Arab News. “These projects are for those who live within 50 meters of the high tide line and those affected by sea erosion.”

She said that under the program, the government has so far helped 3,000 people and plans to rehabilitate a further 15,000. But the assistance covers all those displaced along the hundreds of kilometers-long Kerala coast, which means that only a fraction of the people affected will

receive funding. And if they do, it may be too little to rebuild their households and livelihoods.

Reni Dixon, another resident of the Valiyathura warehouse, said that with the government assistance she would fail to buy land in any port city of Kerala, where her family could rely for sustenance on what they know best — fishing. “If we shift to the rural areas then our livelihood is lost,” she added. “We have lost not only our houses, but also our livelihoods, and the government is not willing to accept that this is a problem.”"

Kerala: Fishers’ hunger strike against Adani port development enters seventh week

https://www.adaniwatch.org/fishers_hunger_strike_against_adani_port_development_in_kerala_enters_seventh_week

"The determined members of a threatened fishing community in India’s southern state of Kerala are now in their seventh week of a relay hunger strike outside an airport operated by the Adani Group. The protest has been prompted by Adani’s massive port redevelopment at Vizhinjam, which has been blamed for coastal erosion and impacts on fishing resources. Seventy-one families have lost their homes to the encroaching sea. The sathyagraha (fasting protest) has, of course, been attacked by supporters of Adani’s port development. Yet the beleaguered fishing community is in a fight for its very existence.

The protest, which began on June 5, World Environment Day, completed 44 days on 18 July. It will carry on for an indefinite period as community members participate on a relay basis. Due to severe coastal erosion that some blame on Adani’s port project, many members of the community have been forced to take refuge in warehouses and schools that have been converted into evacuation areas. The people live like refugees in close proximity to the state’s administrative headquarters. (See videos of the tough life at the camps.)

The phrase ‘caught between the devil and the deep blue sea’ has become literal for Kerala’s fishing community. On the one hand, these hardy people have to flee for their lives to escape the increasing onslaught of the seas. On the other, they have to face the devilry of the Adani Group and its backers in the government and development lobby.

Local people say that time balances everything; this holds true for the seas. If the seabed is dredged, it will take sand from the shores. If you drop rocks into the sea to create a shore at one end, a shore from another end will disappear. Humans are helpless in front of this ‘oceanic justice’. But those in power continue to dredge the ocean floor and pile up massive breakwaters while people who reside on the coast are forced to flee. Fishing boats have been destroyed at the Vizhinjam Harbour, with lives lost. Even before the monsoon struck, several fishing villages in Thiruvananthapuram like Poonthura were hit by severe erosion.

Mounting protests

The protests against Adani's Vizhinjam port project have gathered steam lately. An alliance of fisherfolk, unions, farmers' organisations, ecologists and conservation NGOs was formed prior to World Environment Day and began the relay Sathyagraha in front of the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport.

The protest alliance is composed of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation (Federation of Independent Fishing Labourers), Rashtreeya Kisan Mahasangh (National Alliance of Farmers), Sewa Union, Coastal Watch, TFM Union, Coastal Students Cultural Forum, Tree Walk, AICUF, Sthri Niket Vanitha Federation, Western Ghats Conservation Society, SUCI, Ekta Parishad and Voice. I.P. Udayakumar, who led the Koodamkulam Nuclear Plant protest, inaugurated the Sathyagraha, whose numbers have been swelling.

The Demands of the Protest Alliance

One of the key demands of the protest is to compensate the people who have lost their homes. The alliance insists that the people responsible for this plight, the government and Adani Group, must offer solutions. Sea walls are ineffective in the long run. Depletion of beaches has impacted the livelihoods of the fishermen as there is a lack of space to pull up the nets from the sea. Coastal residents say that the port project is not even half done and already hundreds of homes have been destroyed. They fear that if the project continues, the beaches, roads, houses and allied infrastructure will be engulfed by the sea.

The Adani Group originally signed the agreement for the port project with the then United Democratic Front (UDF) state government. However, the current Left Democratic Front (LDF) government is also facilitating the smooth execution of the project. Both parties have been taking turns in ruling the state for decades and both are reluctant to oppose Adani publicly. In response, the protest alliance has beseeched everyone who is in favour of shutting down the port project to join them in the agitation.

Udayakumar said in 2016 that the Vizhinjam Port project is a huge scam. Speaking during the inauguration of the Sathyagraha, he warned that the Kerala and Tamil Nadu coasts will be destroyed if the port is completed. He said that this is the struggle of those who depend on the sea for their survival. While visiting the protest camp on 17 July 2022, prominent Supreme Court lawyer Prashanth Bhushan said that due to the construction of the Vizhinjam port, fishermen have been forced into relief camps. People should take to streets against

this, Bhushan added. His criticisms of the pro-Adani policies of governments have also been aired through Twitter.

A joint petition highlighting these concerns, signed by 70 acclaimed authors, environmentalists and scientists, was submitted to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on 26 June. The petition said that while the Vizhinjam Port might be a dream project of developers, it will irrevocably destroy the lives and livelihoods of coastal residents.

Constantly Updated Schedules

The minister for ports has predicted that the Vizhinjam development will welcome its first ship towards the end of the year. This is a bold forecast considering with the project only 33% complete. The Adani Group has already made it clear that it will just procure raw materials during the monsoon and resume construction in the sea after the rainy season. In June 2022, the group also submitted a renewed construction schedule to the government which states that the first schedule will only be completed in December 2024. The government claims that it has not approved this new schedule.

The port-construction contract stipulated that the first phase of the project was to be completed by 3 December 2019. It remains incomplete. A legal tussle is occurring between the Kerala government and Adani Group on this failure to complete the project in line with scheduled milestones. The government issued a notice in March 2020 fining the company. Adani argued that its construction schedule had been impacted by 'force majeure' occurrences such as natural disasters and the Covid-19 pandemic. The Group has asked for a five-year extension to complete the project. The Arbitration Tribunal is hearing the case.

Poonthura's curse

Poonthura is one of the highly populated fishing villages in Thiruvananthapuram and lies on the northern side of the Vizhinjam development. Kerala's first sea wall to prevent tidal waves was constructed in Poonthura in the 1970s. Incursions of the sea began here after small breakwaters (of about 600 m each) were built for the Vizhinjam harbour's fish-landing centre. The sea wall has been renewed a few times over the last 50 years. Several groynes (small breakwaters of 25 m each) were built along with the sea wall 15 years ago...

Kerala: Special package sought for fisherfolk

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/special-package-sought-for-fisherfolk-in-kerala/article65659055.ece

"The Blue Economy promoted by the Central government and the decision of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to scrap all subsidies given to the marine fisheries sector within two years will spell doom for fishworkers in the country, District Congress Committee president Palode Ravi said here on Tuesday.

Participating in a reception for Poonthura Jaison, newly elected district president of the Matsyathozhilali Congress, he urged the State and Central governments to announce a special assistance package for the small-scale fishermen in Kerala numbering around 11 lakh. He also called for steps to protect them from “monopolies” in the sector.

Leaders of the Matsyathozhilali Congress participated in the function."

Kerala: Fisheries department to promote inland aquaculture

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fisheries-department-to-promote-inland-aquaculture/article65647813.ece

"As part of its efforts to expand inland aquaculture and ensure marketability, the Fisheries department will open state-of-the-art outlets in Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram, Wayanad and Kozhikode districts. A total of 30 marketing outlets will be set up with an investment of ₹10 lakh per unit.

Inland fish collected directly from farmers through the Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala (ADAK) will be made available at the outlets. The department, in collaboration with the ADAK, aims at creating a centralised marketing system to solve the problems in inland aquaculture. Fish from agency’s farms will be sold at the marketing outlets along with those purchased from farmers for a fixed rate. The ADAK will identify farmers after collecting district-level data. Live fish marketing unit and fresh fish sales will also be part of the outlets.

The outlets are being set up as part of a project to increase the fish resources of the State and prevent the entry of stale fish from other States. Apart from the marketing outlets, the department has implemented a recirculatory aquaculture system, biofloc fish farming and cage culture in reservoirs.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), ₹16 crore has been spent for fish farming in the Banasura Sagar, Karapuzha, Peruvannamoozhi and Kakki reservoirs. Moreover, ₹66.62 crore has been earmarked for aquaculture development activities along with ₹5 crore for seed production units in the financial year 2022-23.

The department is implementing a range of projects, including freshwater aquaculture, carp culture in private and public ponds, integrated paddy-fish culture, brackish water culture, scientific shrimp farming, crab culture, oyster farming and backyard seed production.

The department will provide assistance for private enterprises and individuals to start fish farming. Depending of the farming method, 40% of the unit cost will be offered as financial assistance. Units set up in the previous years will receive 20% of the operating cost as assistance. To promote fish farming, fish seeds are being produced and distributed in farms and hatcheries under the Department of Fisheries. Farmers will also get fish feed at affordable rates through the ADAK."

Kerala: With fish in shallow waters disappearing, fisherfolk staring at penury

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/with-fish-in-shallow-waters-disappearing-fisherfolk-in-kerala-staring-at-penury/article65643792.ece

Dawn breaks, Vitalis slowly glides into undulating waves below an azure sky. With a sparse crew of six, she bobs towards the fishing ground some 10 nautical miles off the shore. The boat returns after five hours, its hold nearly empty. A pall of gloom settles as the fishers offload the catch and divide the meagre earnings among themselves. “This is our fourth futile trip in a row. This is supposed to be the peak season for us (traditional fishers) and we are staring at a famine,” says Thomas, a fisher from Tangassery, Kollam.

With the territorial waters running out of marine stocks, the boats often venture into deep sea investing a lot of fuel, time and effort. But the shoals stay elusive and the once-abundant fields are reporting lower and lower yields.

“I have been venturing into the sea for over five decades and I don’t think we can survive this ordeal. Many species, including croaker and sardine, are fast vanishing from the sea. The traditional sector is heavily dependent on oil sardine and mackerel. For several days now, boats are bringing back only pink perch and anchovy,” says 68-year-old Ambrose, a fisher from Pallithottam, Kollam. Oil sardine and mackerel are pelagic fish (fish that live in the upper water column of the sea) and were once available round the year, according to fishermen. Pink perch, on the other hand, are demersal fish, or fish which are found just above the ocean floor.

Every year, Kerala imposes a trawling ban during the monsoon season to ensure the prosperity of the marine stock. Only traditional crafts are allowed to operate during the period of the ban, which lasts for 52 days from June 9 to July 31. All trawling operations till the midnight of July 31 are prohibited. But more than a month into the ban, the traditional fishers are yet to see any monsoon bounty. Though the sea is free of trawlers and there is no competition from the mechanised sector, their holds are never full.

"Many boats have stopped venturing into the sea as the catch is hardly enough to meet operational costs. We require around ₹50,000 for a brief sortie and very often the catch fetches us less than ₹10,000. Two shares of our total earnings go to the boat owner and the rest is hardly adequate to feed our families. We are all neck deep in debt," says Wilson from Neendakara.

Perhaps this was one reason that forced Esthev and Anto, two fishers from Saktikulangara, to take a risky trip despite the squally weather. As their boat, was idling for 12 days, they ventured into the sea on the morning of July 11 hoping for a brief respite from penury. Hardly one nautical mile into the rough sea, capsized. While the other two crew members were rescued, Esthev's body washed ashore the same day and the search for Anto is still on.

A few years ago, ' karamadi' or ' kamba vala' (shore seine fishing) wasn't a rare sight along the Kerala coast. With the net cast in a semi-circular shape near the shoreline and hauled together by two groups of fishers, the fishing practice targeted pelagic shoals close to the coast. "Even though the net was cast only 2-3 km from the coast, the catch was good. Today, the practice has become extinct in most parts due to the absence of fish in the shallow waters of the coastal sea. We had hundreds of kamba valas in Kerala earlier, but now you will find only 10 or 15," says Esho from Poonthura, Thiruvananthapuram.

Seventy-two-year-old Vasu is familiar with the sea and its intricate system of currents. An old-school fisher, he knows that the surface swimmers move in shoals and turn the brine into shades of red and black. "A whitish tint means pomfrets. The presence of seabirds and air bubbles also helps you in identifying meenpadams(fishing fields). A sudden change in currents or in the direction of the wind indicates natural hazards," says the fisher from Alappad. But of late sun, seasons and constellations have failed him in braving the surf. "We can no longer plan trips based on the lunar calendar as cyclones and storms emerge out of nowhere. Though we see a lot of juveniles, the catch is dipping every day. The sea is becoming unreadable. It's a very scary prospect.

Kerala: State committed to protect fishermen

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/state-committed-to-protect-fishermen/article65624359.ece?homepage=true

"The State government is committed to protecting fishermen, Minister for General Education V. Sivankutty has said.

Speaking after inaugurating a workshop organised by Kerala State Fishermen Federation (affiliated to CITU) here on Sunday, Mr. Sivankutty said steps had been taken through labour welfare schemes to help those who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020-21.

The goal of the Left Democratic Government (LDF) was to take all possible steps to protect employment in the unorganised traditional sector, said Mr Sivankutty. The State had a government that carried out the responsibilities entrusted to it with great will power even during the time of crisis. The LDF was also carrying forward the development and welfare activities without any compromise, said the Minister."

Kerala: Safety checks of fishing boats in progress in Kozhikode

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/safety-checks-of-fishing-boats-in-progress-in-kozhikode/article65627862.ece

"Complying with an order from District Collector N. Tej Lohit Reddy, a comprehensive safety audit is under way in Kozhikode district to ascertain the fitness of fishing boats and quality of lifesaving accessories kept by boat owners for emergency rescue operations. A few recent incidents in which fishermen had a close shave following boat capsize incidents off the Kozhikode coast were also instrumental in tightening safety measures.

“We have been frequently inspecting fishing boats since the onset of monsoon on the government’s instructions. In the wake of the Collector’s latest directive, action will intensified,” said Fisheries Deputy Director Abdul Majeed. He made it clear that fishing boats fitted with inboard engines would be specifically examined.

According to Mr. Majeed, turbulent weather has hit the operation of country boats and those with inboard engines. “As the trawling ban is in place, a majority of large fishing boats are now off the track. There will be heightened vigil once the ban is lifted,” he added. Meanwhile, the Kerala Fishing Boat Owners’ Association welcomed the district administration’s move to enforce safety regulations in boats. However, they demanded that the existing rescue facilities be streamlined.

“The marine ambulance cannot be used for rescue operations when the sea is turbulent. The

rescue squads are still depending on traditional mechanised boats to handle critical situations. Unfortunately, the government spent over ₹6 crore for such an unsuccessful project," said Karichali Preman, vice president of the association. He added that the communication devices for sending emergency messages from boats were still at their infancy. "We follow a quirky relay system or give emergency messages to the fisheries station at Beypore. Similarly, we are yet to have a fully equipped sea rescue squad for the Fisheries department or the Coastal Police," he claimed."

Kerala: Govt to curb juvenile fishing, vendors to face action for illegal sale

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/kerala-govt-to-curb-juvenile-fishing-vendors-to-face-action-for-illegal-sale-1.7671549

"The fisheries department has decided to initiate action against juvenile fishing in the state. The decision was taken observing that juvenile fishing will turn into a threat to Kerala's fish wealth.

At present, the fisheries department is mulling to frame rules to restrict catching and selling of juvenile fish. The state government will issue a notification to curb juvenile fishing under section 18 of Kerala Fish Procurement Marketing and Maintenance of Quality Act 2020-21. The fisheries department is expecting to implement the rule by August.

Strict action will be taken against those who are engaged in sale of juvenile fishing and vehicles will be seized doing illegal sale. At present, there is no restrictions on selling juvenile fish in the market. Hence, the fishermen and other workers have been selling plenty of juvenile fish in the market cheating the fisheries officials. Meanwhile, only inspections to seize stale fish are in progress across the state. If the fisheries department initiates inspection, juvenile fishing will be checked. It is learnt that 'Ayala' (Indian Mackerel), 'Mathi' (sardine) are the fish breeds which largely fall prey to juvenile fishing. The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act 1980 prescribes a minimum legal size for 58 fish species to check juvenile fishing. As per the rule, fishermen are allowed to catch mackerel of 14 cm and sardine of 10 cm. But it is observed that the size of the fish caught by the fishermen is only 5-6 cm. Fisheries assistant director NS Sreelu informed that an awareness programme will be launched among fishermen to check juvenile fishing. The government has allotted Rs 13 lakh for this drive. ""Awareness programme on juvenile fishing will be launched across the state once the government issues notification declaring juvenile

fishing illegal,"" said the official."

Kerala: Sharp decline of oil sardine

https://theprint.in/india/sharp-decline-of-oil-sardine-in-kerala-says-cmfri/1026182/

"Catch of oil sardine, a tasty and favourite variety of marine fish integral to Kerala cuisine, has drastically decreased to a meagre 3,297 tonnes in the southern state last year, according to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI).

"Compared to the previous year, 2021 experienced a drop of 75 per cent in the sardine catch across the Kerala coast. This was the lowest catch of the fish after 1994 in the state. Again, this was 98 percent lower than the annual average of sardine availability during 1995-2020 which is 1.66 lakh tonne," the central institute said in the finding presented at a workshop held at its headquarter here. However, Kerala recorded 5.55 lakh tonne of total marine catch in 2021 registering an increase of 54 per cent compared to the COVID-hit 2020 in which it was 3.6 lakh tonne, CMFRI said in the workshop participated by the representatives of various fishers' organisations.

Lesser sardine (65,326 tonne) topped the list of the most landed resources in the state in 2021, followed by Indian mackerel (56,029 tonne) and scad (53,525 tonne). Even as oil sardine, silver bellies and black pomfret decreased, penaeid prawns, squid and threadfin breams increased significantly during the year, said Dr T M Najmudeen while presenting the findings.

Small-scale fishers bear the brunt of dwindling catch of sardine. Kerala's marine fisheries sector suffered a severe loss owing to the steep decline in the catch of oil sardine, showed another CMFRI study that was presented at the workshop. The annual value of the sardine in the landing centres dropped to Rs 30 crore from that of Rs 608 crore in 2014, incurring a loss of Rs 578 crore to the sector, said Dr N Aswathy, Principal Scientist of CMFRI, who led the study.

The small-scale fishermen who venture into the sea on outboard ring seins bore the brunt of the dwindling catch of the sardine as they primarily depended upon this fish for livelihood. Even as many other fish resources showed an increase in the landings, the annual income of this group of fishers was reduced to Rs 90,262 in 2021 from that of Rs 3.35 lakh, she said.

Meanwhile, the workshop has called for strict measures to curb juvenile fishing as it causes severe loss to the marine fisheries sector. Speaking at the meet, fishery experts warned that juvenile fishing practices would result in economic loss and resource depletion as well. Citing CMFRI's study, Najmudeen pointed out that 31 per cent of threadfin breams (Kilimeen) caught from the Kerala coast last year were juveniles.

“This alone has incurred a loss of Rs 74 crore to the sector,” he said, adding that implementation of the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) had a significant impact in the sector. President of Matsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi Charles George, who presided over the function, said fishermen across the state were in deep crisis owing to steep hikes in fuel prices and dwindling catch of commercially important fishes, especially the Indian oil sardine.

“In order to support the fishermen families, special famine packages or subsidies should be provided to them,” he said. Fishermen should stay away from juvenile fishing as it would only add to deepen their crisis in a way that the practice might badly affect the sustainability of the resources, George added.

The workshop also called for uniform implementation of the MLS regulations across the coastal states of the country. The marine fisheries sector is also plagued by climate change, pollution and plastic litter among other reasons, the workshop observed.

Kerala: Kerosene price hike spells fresh trouble for traditional fishermen

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kerosene-price-hike-spells-fresh-trouble-for-keralas-traditional-fishermen/article65595319.ece

"Traditional fishermen, already hit by a shortage of catch and restricted fishing days on account of bad weather conditions, are facing another obstacle with kerosene price in the market going up to ₹102 a litre.

“Our conclusion is that the latest price hike will virtually destroy the traditional sector,” said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, which represents traditional fishermen. The fishermen’s union called the price hike unjustified and said it would break the back of the traditional fishing sector.

With the latest hike, the price of kerosene has gone up by ₹14 a litre. The price was ₹84 in the month of May. It was hiked by ₹4 in June and the latest hike is effective from July 1. Along with the basic price of kerosene, transport charges, dealers’ commission and taxes were applicable when kerosene was sold through the public distribution system, said a communication from the Civil Supplies department.

The communication said that though the price of kerosene was hiked by ₹4 in June, the PDS price in the State was not hiked. At present, subsidised kerosene was sold through the PDS system in the State at ₹84, the communication added. Instructions have been issued by Minister G.R. Anil to continue with the same price until stocks last.

Mr. George said there was constant pressure on the State government from the Union government to end the diversion of a part of the allotted quota of kerosene to the State to the fisheries sector. He said while the volume of kerosene supplies used to be around 28,000 kilo litres a few months ago, the volume had been cut down to 2,000 kilo litres. The supplies to the fisheries sector had been cut from 450 litres per month to 129 litres, he added.

The price hike had come at a time when the traditional fishermen were expecting to reap the benefits of the ban on trawling during the rainy season, said Mr. George. Though the State government had, during the last elections, promised to supply kerosene at ₹25 a litre to the fishing sector, the promise was not fulfilled promise even as Tamil Nadu was still supplying kerosene to the sector at ₹20 a litre, he said."

Kerala: Protest against illegal trawling

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/protest-against-illegal-trawling/articleshow/92625631.cms

"Around 400 fishermen of Puthukurichy, Marinad and Santhipuram with the support of the parish priests of the area are on an indefinite strike against unauthorized trawling in spawning season in their locality. Although the state has declared a trawling ban to protect the marine resources during the spawning season, the traditional fishermen community of Marinad is raising concerns about over exploitation of marine resources.

According to the community, fishing is their only way of survival and trawling is completely destroying juvenile fish species. The protesters have demanded enforcement of instructions imposed by the state government.

Rajesh S, a fisherman, said that a huge amount of juvenile fish is being hunted via ring net (trawling) method. When fishermen get 10 baskets of fish, the trawling team from Perumathura catches more than 500 baskets of juvenile fish, which is about 5,000 kg. The massive number of fish sold by the trawling team is having a large impact on the fishermen as the price of fish declines when the availability is high, he added.

“When the juvenile fish varieties are caught, the chances of reproduction also decline. If they continue to do this, we will lose our fish resource completely,” said Christopher. According to district fishery officer Sheeja Mary, the report regarding unauthorized trawling has been forwarded to higher authorities.

Meanwhile, the department has also initiated regular patrolling in the sea. She said that strict

action would be taken against those who violate the instructions."

Kerala: No hike in kerosene subsidy for fishers: Minister

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/no-hike-in-kerosene-subsidy-for-fishers-minister/article65585813.ece

"Minister for Fisheries Saji Cherian has called for Opposition support in conducting a joint protest to address the twin problems of hike in price of kerosene and cut in quota to the State that have hit fishers hard.

Responding to questions from ruling and Opposition members during the Question Hour in the Assembly on Thursday, Mr. Cherian said this was a grave problem that could not be addressed by the State government alone.

The previous Left Democratic Front government had provided a subsidy of ₹25 when the price of kerosene was ₹49 a litre. However, now its price stood at ₹134 a litre. Moreover, not even half the requirement of kerosene by the fishers was being provided. A traditional fishing boat with two 9.9-hp engines required 35 to 60 litres of kerosene a day. However, these boats got only 140 litres from Matsyafed, and 129 litres from the Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation at subsidised rate every month. Only if the State got 1 lakh litres a year from the Union government under subsidy-less quota could this shortage be met to an extent.

The State had also held meetings with the oil companies and written to the Union Minister for Fisheries seeking recognition for Matsyafed as a wholesale agent for fuel distribution to no avail.

‘ No subsidy increase’

To the Opposition demand for a reduction in tax from the increased kerosene prices and increase in government subsidy for kerosene, Mr. Cherian said these were not the answer to the problem. If the State were to increase the subsidy in tune with the rising price of kerosene, it would incur a huge financial burden.

The Minister said the government’s goal was to insure all fishing craft. It was in 2018-19 that

insurance cover for traditional boats was provided. Only 1.3% of the insured amount was to be paid as premium. Of that, the government paid 90%, while the beneficiary had to pay the rest. In the 2021-22 financial year, 2,758 boats and engines were insured. There were 34,064 traditional boats registered in the State. Of them, nearly 14,000 were less than a decade old. Awareness of insurance cover for the boats had to be created, and a campaign was under way. The State government had also announced a compensation of ₹5 lakh to fishers without insurance who died at sea.

An amount of ₹4 crore had been sanctioned this financial year for provide interest-free loans to active fishers who were registered with Matsyafed for purchase of fishing boat and fishing equipment, the Minister said."

Kerala: Small fish being caught extensively violating trawling ban

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/no-heed-to-trawling-ban-small-fish-being-caught-extensively-in-kerala-cmfri-officials-visit-shores-1.7629558

"The hunt for small fish continues to be unaffected even as trawling ban has been imposed in the state. Since the start of the trawling ban, small sardines (mathi) and mackerels (ayila) are arriving in plenty in fish markets. Small king fish (ayakura) are also being caught and sold extensively in markets. The Marine Enforcement Department caught eight fishing boats in the state recently over this matter.

The Fisheries department has also come forward with measures against violators. As the fish caught during trawling ban are kept away from harbours and fish landing centres and are sold through auction, these measures are not proving to be very effective. The officials from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) visited the shores the other day following reports that small fish were being caught even after imposing trawling ban. Loss worth crores

According to the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Rules, 58 species of fish can be caught only if they are of a certain size. As per these regulations, mackerels must be 14 cm in length and sardines must be 10 cm in length. The fish caught during the last two days are mostly small ones that are only five to six centimetres long. CMFRI Ret. MFD Head Dr Sunil Mohammed said that in four weeks' time these fish would have grown more than double their size. As the fish grow larger in size, their weight will increase and so will their price. The small fish caught are being sold for lower prices. Last day, small mackerels were sold for Rs 50-100. At present, 1 kg of mackerel will have more than 100 fish. When the mackerels grow in size, 1 kg will have only six or seven fish and will fetch a good price. When the small fish are caught, the chances of reproduction also diminishes. It is said in the study conducted by CMFRI that sardine is in its reproductive stage when it grows up to 14 to 16 cms. Kerala’s shores have

witnessed a fall in the number of sardines for many years now. 3.9 lakh tonnes of sardine was caught from Kerala shores in 2012 which was reduced to just 77,093 tonnes by 2018."

Kerala: Fishers' forums seek ban on small boats from other States

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-forums-seek-ban-on-small-boats-from-other-states/article65545684.ece

"The seizure of three fibre boats from other States recently by the Fisheries department off the Kochi coast, despite a 52-day trawling ban from June 9 midnight, has prompted the Matsya Mekhala Samrakshana Samiti to demand a ban on even small boats from other States fishing off the Kerala coast. Fisheries department sources said these boats had been seized recently with the department and the coastal police keeping a strict vigil on fishing activities during the days of trawling ban. Even these small boats are exploiting the marine resources off the Kerala coast while the fishing sector in the State is in dire straits, said Sherry J. Thomas, general convener of the Samiti. Department sources said that the catch in these boats were seized but boats from other States had no legal hurdles to operate off Kerala coast. These boats were asked to discontinue their operations to avoid a tense situation with the local fishers and to avoid a law and order problem.

'No restrictions'

Mr. Thomas claimed that the fishing operations by boats from other States would affect the availability of fish for the local fishermen after the trawl ban period, which ends on July 31. He alleged that while Kerala government was strict on renewing licences of fishing boats that are more than 15 years old, boats from other States operated without these restrictions. Jackson Pollayil of the Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation said the fishing boats from other States targeted resources like threadfin breams (kili meen) mostly, which was in demand in the market. He alleged that these boats from other states were using banned gears for fishing operations. The government should ban these practices to help local fishers, he added. Mr. Thomas also alleged that while stringent norms were being applied to fishing boats, tourist boats were given permits with leniency. These restrictions gave an open field for boats from other States to exploit the resources off the Kerala coast, he added."

Kerala: Minister warns against unscientific fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/minister-warns-against-unscientific-fishing/article65533992.ece

"Stringent action will be taken against people and vessels involved in illegal and unscientific fishing in Kerala waters, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said.

In a statement issued on Thursday, Mr. Cherian said that as per the amended Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act, square mesh had been made mandatory at the codend of trawl nets. Purse seine nets, pelagic or midwater trawling and bull trawling had been completely banned.

He said the government was aware of fishermen netting juvenile fish using traditional boats for the fertiliser industry. They should refrain from illegal activity. ""Inspections will be carried out in all harbours and fish landing centres across the State. Registration and licence of vessels involved in illegal practices will be cancelled,"" the Minister said."

Kerala: Farmers urge the state government to regulate aquaculture sector

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/farmers-urge-kerala-government-to-regulate-aquaculture-sector/article65539818.ece

"Aqua farmers have appealed to the State government to intervene to regulate fish farming in the State in such a way that the farmers receive remunerative prices for the produce and to ensure that fair practices are followed.

According to the Kerala Fish Farmers' Association, there are around 12,000 registered fish farmers in the State and also others who take up fish farming without licence. The activity, like dairying, had become a means of livelihood for such people, said a fish farmer and former president of the association Reji Poothara.

He said several farmers used slaughterhouse and poultry waste as feed for the fish while others depended only on fish feed available in the market. There were differences in the cost of production in the two practices, said Mr. Poothara, who has been cultivating genetically improved farmed tilapia as well as other fishes.

K.K. Vijayan, the former director of the ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture in Chennai, said Kerala had great potential for aquaculture, but it was not being utilised. He said the State needed commercial grade hatcheries to produce quality seeds of commercially important fishes as well as commercial feed mills to produce quality formulated feeds. It would encourage more farmers and entrepreneurs to come into the field because aquaculture was a

great opportunity to generate employment and income for people, he said, adding that public-private partnership in aquaculture was needed.

Dr. Vijayan said aquaculture needed attention and hard work for positive results. The cultivation of fish not only generated job opportunities but also opened a window to food security. He said states such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu were much ahead of Kerala in aquaculture, especially in shrimp production. The State must intervene in a serious manner to encourage and support aquaculture using its vast aquatic resources, he said. While the total aquaculture production in the country was over a million tonnes, Kerala's production was only around 50,000 tonnes, he said. Thomas Abraham, an aqua farmer in Pathanamthitta district, said the availability of feed and fish seeds was a huge problem. He said farmers who used waste materials to feed fish were able to sell their produce at much lower prices than those cultivating fish using approved feed materials."

Kerala: Tamil Nadu fishing vessels scouring Kerala waters; boat owners to hold protest

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jun/17/tn-fishing-vessels-scouring-kerala-waters-boat-owners-to-hold-protest-2466502.html

"Fishing boat owners have decided to stage protest alleging that hundreds of fibre boats from Tamil Nadu have started scouring the coastal waters after the start of the 52-day trawl ban period. The annual trawl ban is imposed to ensure no disturbance to fish species during the breeding season. However, as motorised country crafts used by traditional fishermen are allowed to continue fishing activities during the ban period, Kerala has been witnessing increased presence of Tamil Nadu fibre boats in the coastal waters, they said.

“Hundreds of fibre boats from Tamil Nadu are involved in fishing activities off the coasts of Kochi and Thrissur district. These boats fish in Kerala’s coastal waters and sell the catch to fish dealers in Kerala. They catch demersal fish species using banned nets, which leads to depletion of marine resources. The annual fishing ban has failed to serve the purpose as huge outboard engine boats operated by traditional fishermen and Tamil Nadu boats are involved in over fishing,” said All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalapurakal.

The traditional fishermen in Kerala are also concerned about the increasing presence of Tamil Nadu fishermen in Kerala waters. “The Tamil Nadu fishermen don’t allow us to enter the coastal waters even in emergency situations. But we are witnessing increased presence of Tamil Nadu fibre boats in our coastal waters during the trawl ban period. There should be some kind of regulation to stop overfishing,” said National Fishworkers Federation treasurer Jackson Pollayil.

The Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation (Amendment) Act was introduced in 2017 to regulate fishing activities following depletion of marine resources due to overfishing. As per the act, the government will allow building of a new boat only to replace an existing vessel. Fishing boat owners allege that the government is violating this provision by liberally issuing licence to Tamil Nadu boats on payment of a user fee. A meeting of the fishing boat owners on June 18 will decide on launching a protest. The boat owners are also planning to approach the High Court.

"Any traditional fisherman has the right to fish in the coastal waters anywhere in India and we cannot stop it. A few Tamil Nadu fishermen are catching fish beyond the territorial waters and they sell the catch in Kerala. We are allowing them to sell the catch in Kerala on payment of user fee. The allegations regarding the presence of a large number of Tamil Nadu boats in Kerala are not true," said fisheries deputy director (marine) M Thajudeen.

"Many Tamil Nadu longliner boats operate from Kochi as they get better price for their catch here. The trawl ban during June and July is not helping the purpose as it is not the breeding season of demersal fish which are caught by mechanised boats. The spawning season of oil sardine and mackerel is during the months of April and May," said fisheries scientist K Sunil Mohamed."

Kerala: Fishers object to draft CZMP

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fishers-object-to-draft-czmp/articleshow/92242882.cms

"An informal forum of fishers, coastal communities and subject experts are meeting in the city on Thursday to raise their objections to the recommendation of govt-led committee led by additional chief secretary Venu V in its draft coastal zone management plan (CZMP).

The discussion will be held at the Achutha Menon Hall on Ernakulam Public Library compound at 2pm. According to the organizers, the Kerala High Court had recommended an integrated fishery development plan in Kerala. However, no discussions have been held, neither with the fishers nor the local communities when the Venu committee report was submitted and accepted by the government.

A people's commission on CRZ has been formed to take this discussion forward to the government and its draft of demands will be discussed on Thursday. The main demand is that all coastal gram panchayats should be brought under the CRZ IIIA category. The density of population prescribed in CRZ 2019 is 2,061 for panchayats to be included under CRZ III A.

This may be reduced to 1,500 considering the demographic patterns of fishers and coastal communities. “The clause to recategorize 175 coastal gram panchayats as CRZ II in the GO No. 2/2022/ENVT on March 24 is unacceptable. It should be withdrawn,” said the people’s commission.

Among the other demands are getting Integrated Island Management Plans prepared for all inhabited backwater islands, as directed in the CRZ 2019, with due participation and meaningful involvement of local bodies and fisher community organizations. This may be prepared for cluster of islands.

Punargeham project, which aims at the rehabilitation of fishermen families residing within 50m from hightide line, may be redesigned with location specific differential funding and taking people into confidence. “The recommendations were based on the discussions among the fishers and other local communities with the help of NGOs, social scientists and fisheries experts,” said Charles George of the organizing committee."

Kerala: Chellanam model fishing village to be developed at a cost of ₹750 crore

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/chellanam-model-fishing-village-to-be-developed-at-a-cost-of-750-crore/article65507250.ece

"The development of the Chellanam model fishing village project will involve an investment of approximately ₹750 crore. The report on the project is in its final stages and is expected to be submitted to the government later this month.

An interim report on the Matsya Gramam project was submitted earlier this year after consultations with all stakeholders. Sources in the Kerala Coastal Area Development Corporation, which is collaborating with the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) to implement the project said around ₹150 crore had been allocated in the current State budget for the project, while the rest of the money would have to be sourced from financial agencies. The proposals for the development of the model fishing village will be submitted to the State Planning Board for approval before the sourcing of funds is finalised.

KUFOS Vice Chancellor Riji K. John said there would be a holistic approach to the development of the model fishing village taking into consideration the social and economic uplift of the people in the coastal village.

Chellanam is among the 10 coastal spots identified as affected seriously by sea erosion along the Kerala coast. The problems have turned more acute after cyclone Okhi hit the coast in December 2017. Dr. John said stakeholders had been consulted to elicit their views on the ways

the coastal village should be developed as a model for the entire State.

Economic security, protection of life and property, sustainable agriculture and fish production, and development of social and physical infrastructure, including in healthcare, are the key issues that are being addressed in the masterplan for the village. A ₹344-crore project to protect the Chellanam coast utilising tetrapods is progressing fast. Nearly 7 km of the most vulnerable segments of the coast will be covered by the tetrapod projects in its first phase, while groynes will be erected in the second phase."

Kerala: Shattered lives of fishermen left high and dry

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/jun/08/shattered-lives-of-fishermen-left-high-and-dry-2462943.html

"Erratic weather conditions due to climate change, threat of cyclonic storms round the year and advancing sea the fishermen community in Thiruvananthapuram is fighting many odds each day. With their livelihood hampered, these fishers are struggling to support their families. Due to weather disruptions, they rarely get to fish these days. These families are in constant danger of displacement and starvation. Ever since Ockhi hit the shores, cyclonic storms have become a regular affair in the state but Kerala is still not prepared to handle them. In the past three to four years, the coastal areas have been eaten away by sea erosion. The state departments lack the experience to prevent such natural disasters.

Hike in kerosene prices

The intermittent hike in kerosene price has also crippled the fishing community. Jackson Pollayil of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation said “Even if the fishers go out in the sea, they are unable to make any profit as they are spending more on the fuel now. The number of days they can fish has also reduced largely,” said Jackson. In 2021, the fishers in Kerala lost around 76 working days. “The state government should compensate the fishermen for the days they lost. Precautions being taken as part of disaster management is stifling their livelihood. The government agencies should write off all the loans given to fishermen who are struggling for survival. The agencies like Mathsyafed are offering loans to fishers at 12.5 percent interest with an additional service charge,” said Jackson.

Families face displacement

Valiyathura, a coastal hamlet in the capital, is the worst hit. Over the last four years, around 1,200 homes were destroyed and swallowed by the sea in Valiyathura alone. The situation is similar at Cheriyathura, Bheemapally, Kochuthoppu, Valiyathopp, Kannanthura and Vettucaud.

Xavier Andrews, a traditional fisherman, and his family from Valiyathura are constantly living in the fear of displacement. “Around four rows of houses along the Valiyathura coast have been washed away by the advancing sea. My house, which belonged to my mother, where I have been living for the past 45 years, will be gone this monsoon. The government should take steps to protect us and our property. Every year, hundreds of houses are getting washed away. I have been asked to move to the relief camp,” said Xavier.

Lack of profit has plunged Xavier’s family into a deep financial crisis. “There is no shore for fishing. We have to go to Vizhinjam to venture into the sea. Local fishermen there often create friction. But this is the only job I know to do,” he added. Former Valiyathura ward councillor Tony Oliver said 50 out of the 140 constituencies in Kerala are coastal areas and the changing governments have failed the fishermen community. “They have no clean drinking water or sewage lines. Apart from announcements, no projects were launched to protect the coast from the advancing sea. They just want our votes. There is no opposition to help raise our demands either,” said Tony.

Unscientific fishing activities

The destruction of the shoreline has adversely affected the livelihood of around 4,500 kambavala (gill nets) fishermen. There are around 87 kambavala units in Poonthura. “Fishing equipment worth lakhs have been damaged and I am in a deep financial crisis. We have to dole out more money for fishing and it’s not profitable anymore,” said Antony Stancilas, a traditional kambavala fisherman.

“The state randomly issues warnings on days and restricts us from venturing into the sea, even when the weather is normal. This should stop. Weather warnings should be more accurate as our livelihood depends on this. Unscientific fishing activities by industrial units have become rampant. Many countries and other states are curbing trawling activities to improve marine resources. Traditional fishermen are returning empty handed because of all this,” said Anto Elias, vice chairman of the Mathsyathozhili Karshaka Samyukta Samara Samiti.

Kerala: 52-day trawling ban to begin on Thursday

https://www.canindia.com/52-day-trawling-ban-to-begin-in-kerala-on-thursday/

"Starting Thursday midnight, fishing trawlers will have to keep off 12 nautical miles away from the Kerala coast as a 52-day-long trawling ban will come into effect. The ban, which was first enforced in 1988, however is not applicable to fishermen who engage on traditional boats. Thiruvananthapuram District Collector Navjot Khosa announced that the ban will remain in force till July 31.

“All arrangements are in place and the fisher folks for any of their needs can get in touch with the control room that will be functional… All the facilities will be there for those who wish to park their fishing boats and vessels,” said Khosa.

The ban is enforced to ensure that there is no disturbance during the breeding season of fish. Any trawler that violates the ban will be fined. The ban is expected to hike fish prices by 30 per cent. Kerala has over 200 marine fishing villages and the total number of fishermen is over 7 lakhs. During the ban period, the state government provides relief to the fisher folk with ration."

Kerala: Stir by fishers at Shangumughom enters second day

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/stir-by-fishers-at-shangumughom-enters-second-day/article65500636.ece

"An indefinite stir launched by fishers and backed by farmers at Shangumughom, which sought the State government stop work on the Vizhinjam port project and rehabilitate families left homeless by coastal erosion, entered the second day on Monday. They have demanded a comprehensive study on the coastal situation and demanded that the families be adequately compensated. The ‘Relay Satyagraha’ was kicked off near the Shangumughom gate of the Thiruvananthapuram domestic airport on Sunday evening.

Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh vice chairman John Joseph, inaugurating the stir, said hundreds of people were left homeless and that was proof enough that the port project was detrimental to the interests of the State. Continuing with the ‘‘unscientific construction”, he said, would destroy the Thiruvananthapuram coast. Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation State president Jackson Pollayil presided.

According to fishers, the government’s assurances regarding compensation packages remain unfulfilled. The government also ignored the federation's demand that a scientific panel be constituted for assessing the damage caused the by port project to the coastal ecosystem. Fishers from various parts of the State would join the 'relay satyagraha' in the days ahead, Mr. Pollayil said.

litate families left homeless by coastal erosion, entered the second day on Monday. They have demanded a comprehensive study on the coastal situation and demanded that the families be adequately compensated. The ‘Relay Satyagraha’ was kicked off near the Shangumughom gate of the Thiruvananthapuram domestic airport on Sunday evening."

Kerala: Rs 1 per litre drinking water available for fishermen

http://www.uniindia.com/~/rs-1-per-litre-drinking-water-available-for-fishermen/States/news/2747696.html

"Drinking water for Rs 1 per litre is available for fishermen working at
Cochin Fisheries Harbour (CFH) from June 2 onwards. Aiming to supply filtered/treated water at a very nominal rate, Coin operated Water ATM (Water Kiosk), the first of its kind in Kochi area, was inaugurated by Rajesh Gopalakrishnan, Chief General Manager, Cochin Shipyard Ltd, here on Thursday.

The project at a cost of Rs 7.20 lakh was implemented with the financial support of CSR fund from the Cochin Shipyard Ltd. V.Thuraipandian, Chief Mechanical Engineer, Ms Premakumari, Secretary, Paritosh Bala, Chief Engineer, S.K.Sahu, FA & CAO, KI Muthukoya, CMO (i/c), Cochin Port Authority, Sambath Kumar, AGM CSL, Ms Sangeetha NR, State Co-ordinator, Netfish-MPEDA, officials of Cochin Port Authority, MPEDA, and representatives of stakeholders were present in the function."

Kerala: New rescue shelters under consideration for fishers in Kozhikode

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/new-rescue-shelters-under-consideration-for-fishers-in-kozhikode/article65470029.ece

"Rescue shelters exclusively for fishermen families living close to the coast under the threat of sea erosion are likely to be a reality soon, as part of a finalised action plan for mitigating monsoon-related calamities in Kozhikode district. In Kozhikode city limits, there will be at least four such shelters for the speedy relocation of affected families.

Revenue and Fisheries department officials will team up for finalising the spots and making the necessary arrangements. Similar arrangements will be made at other vulnerable coastal areas in Koyilandy, Payyoli and Vadakara. The support of charitable organisations and voluntary sponsors will be sourced to ensure the proper management of such facilities.

The action plan suggests the opening of such shelters to cover the vulnerable coastal areas around Beypore, Puthiyangadi and Santhi Nagar in the city limits. Recurring incidents of sea erosion and the hardship faced by underprivileged families prompted the disaster response teams to suggest a separate action plan for the coastal community.

Revenue department officials said the additional shelters would help reduce overcrowding in relief camps. The opening of separate shelters for fishermen families was a long pending demand put forth by various fishermen's welfare organisations. According to them, the

relocation of a large number of families to relief camps was creating a lot inconvenience. They had said that the fishermen were the majority in the affected group and they should be given priority. According to the latest figures of the Fisheries department, the highest number of families living close to vulnerable coastal areas in the Malabar region is in Kozhikode. There are 2,709 such families in the district. Though the department is constantly in touch with them for their permanent relocation under the 'Punargeham' scheme, only 273 families have agreed to cooperate."

Kerala: Vembanad Lake fish count indicates decline in backwater salinity

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/may/29/vembanad-lake-fish-count-indicates-decline-in-backwater-salinity-study-2459406.html

"The lives of people inhabiting the banks of Vembanad Lake are deeply connected with the brackish water system. Fishing and black clam collection are the only source of livelihood for a predominant number of people here. Fishermen pushing country-made boats through backwaters and tourists arriving to enjoy the beauty of backwaters seen enjoying fish delicacies of the region are common sights for the people of Kottayam and Alappuzha districts.

However, unseasonal rains and climate change appear to have cast a shadow on the brackish ecosystem of the Vembanad backwaters. As per the findings of the Vembanad Fish Count-2022, organised under the aegis of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), the nature of the lake water has changed with a sharp decline in its salinity.

While the two-day-long fish count has spotted 43 fin fishes and five shellfishes in Vembanad Lake, a vast majority of them belonged to the freshwater category.

According to ATREE officials, it was a surprise finding which made this year's fish count different from the previous 14 years. ""This is for the first time that the presence of 'Chela Fasciata', a purely freshwater fish has been reported from Vembanad Lake. This indicates the freshwater nature of the lake,"" they said.

Meanwhile, Jojo T D, project coordinator at ATREE Community Environment Resource Centre (CERC), said though a delay in opening the Thanneermukkam Bund (Saline water barrier) and torrential rains might be the reasons for a change in the nature of lake water, a detailed study is needed to ascertain such assumptions. According to him, a change in the nature of water would badly affect the fish and black clam (Villorita cyprinoides) deposit in the backwater. ""Usually, salinity level is up to 16 ppt during the time of fish count being conducted in the month of May every year. However, this time it is zero, which is a surprising finding,"" he said.

He added that the decline in salinity would affect the breeding of black clams and the arrival of migratory fishes from sea. ""The black clams usually have two breeding seasons that fall in December-January and April-May. With Thanneermukkam saline water barrier being closed during the December-January season, the breeding of black clams happens in April and May. Moreover, 10 to 12 ppt of salinity is needed for the breeding of clams. If the lake water loses its salinity, it would affect the population of clams and their reproduction is likely to decrease in the following season,"" Jojo said.

Jojo added that the presence of migratory fish from the sea could not be found in the survey. ""Usually, lake water is more brackish during the summer season and migratory fish are common here during the fish count,"" he said.

The survey was conducted by collecting samples from 15 points dividing the entire lake into West, East and Riverine sections. The survey was conducted in association with Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Biology, Kerala University and Vembanad Kayal Samrakshana Samithy. The survey also spotted babies of 'Oreochromis niloticus', a fish variety that has been included in the Global Invasive Species Database. Following this, the organisers suggested a detailed study into the presence of invasive fishes which may affect the deposit of natural fishes."

Kerala: KSSP, KUFOS to draw up vision document for inland fisheries, aquaculture

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kssp-kufos-to-draw-up-vision-document-for-inland-fisheries-aquaculture/article65473053.ece

"The Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) and the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) are joining hands to draw up a vision document on the future of inland fisheries and aquaculture by 2025.

KUFOS Vice Chancellor K. Riji John said Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan would inaugurate a one-day workshop for stakeholders, including farmers, those involved in inland fisheries and scientists, at the university on June 6 as part of preparations for the document.

M.C. Jinadevan, Thripunithura zonal secretary of the KSSP, said the Parishad had been involved in addressing various social, environmental, educational and economic issues in the State. Addressing issues of the inland fisheries sector and exploring the potential for aquaculture in the State were part of the KSSP efforts, he said.

Dr. John, who is the chief patron of the event, said fisheries scientists and farmers from across

the State would present their ideas to improve aquaculture production and inland fisheries. The discussions will feature appraisal of technologies in aquaculture for a sustainable future as well as fish-based livelihood options. The sessions will be open to those who wish to present their ideas and share their experiences.

According to a Fisheries department appraisal, Kerala has an aquaculture production potential of 1.32 lakh tonnes. There are 6,168 hectares of freshwater ponds in private ownership while there are 2,302 hectares of public freshwater ponds. There are also brackish water ponds spread over 2,543 hectares where production levels can be up to four tonnes per hectare.

Freshwater fields with potential for aquaculture are spread over 49,718 hectares while the brackish water fields are spread over 5,428 hectares. The aquaculture potential of the State includes cultivation of oyster and mussels, cage farming, aquaculture in artificial ponds (padutha), deployment of techniques like aquaponics and biofloc."

Kerala: Trawling ban to take effect from June 9 midnight

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/trawling-ban-to-take-effect-from-june-9-midnight/article65470116.ece

"The Fisheries department has decided to impose the annual trawling ban between the midnight of June 9 and July 31. The 52-day ban is part of measures being undertaken to conserve marine fisheries resources during the monsoon, which is considered the spawning period for the commercially important fish species off the coast of Kerala, that include oil sardines. The decision was taken at a meeting of fisheries stakeholders with officials in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday.

While the ban is applicable to trawlers, traditional boats are exempted from its purview. All fuel supply bunkers for trawling boats will shut down on June 9, Fisheries department sources said. They added that the coastal police and Fisheries officials would be vigilant against violation of trawling ban.

It is estimated that there are around 8,000 traditional canoes and nearly 4,000 mechanised boats operating off the coast of Kerala. Fisheries industry sources pointed out that around 300 of the mechanised vessels had been scrapped over the past few years for various reasons, including lack of profitability triggered by fish scarcity.

Big boat owners were not in favour of a ban on trawling at least for this season considering the loss of around 100 days of fishing days last year owing to weather warnings and pandemic curbs. But traditional fishers' unions had demanded an extended period of ban to conserve

resources. The unions are of the view that the ban should be extended to 90 days. Trawling ban has been in effect since 1988, when it was introduced on the recommendations of the Balakrishnan Nair Committee, which studied the impact of trawling on marine fish resources.

It is estimated that the mechanised sector, including trawlers, account for around 70% of fish landings, while the rest is accounted for by the traditional sector, which is basically artisanal fishing. Oil sardines once dominated fish landings in the past, but Indian mackerels, lesser sardines, threadfin breams, and shrimps have been landing in bigger volumes in recent years."

Kerala: Government's relocation plans fail to move fishers in Malabar coast

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/governments-relocation-plans-fail-to-move-fishers-in-malabar-coast/article65453897.ece

"Along the riskiest Kothi coastline is the tile-thatched house of 32-year-old N.V. Jerseena. The woman stands fearless in the congested fishermen colony where mighty waves frequently peep through the seawall. She is one among the 41 families in the coast where they stick to a minimalistic living. Not that they hate a better living, but the pain of losing everything to the furious sea is beyond a wild guess for anyone.

The children around her neighbourhood are least aware of the risky lives. Twelve-year-old Mohammed Basith and his friends are always busy playing football. But, Ajmal, a class five student, looks a bit serious. "I have seen many fishing boats being washed away during high tide," says this young boy.

The highest number of such vulnerable families in northern Kerala coastline is in Kozhikode. There are now 2,709 families living under sea erosion threat, where the district has already lost about 80 metres of its coast. Of the group, only 273 are willing to relocate.

"Moving to a remote place with the high price of land is impossible for us. It is also tough to travel from such locations to harbours with the fish implements," says K.V. Basheer, a fisherman from Nainamvalappu, another badly affected coastline. He laments that the offers from the government are hardly attractive for a sudden shift.

The sentiment is almost the same in Malappuram district where there are 1,806 families settled along the riskiest coastline. So far only 157 families have accepted the State government's aid for relocation. Though 1,143 families are willing, it may take several years to fulfil their dream.

"People are ready to shift if they get a convenient spot closer to the harbours," points out P.K. Alavi, an elderly fisherman from Tanur in Malappuram. He feels that many are uncomfortable

with the relocation plan as they have already learnt to adjust with the challenges.

In Kannur, the sea erosion threat is continuing to be a problem for 1,583 families. Yet, only 118 families have registered to cooperate with the relocation plan. Only 30 houses are now under different stages of construction.

Though the number of affected are comparatively less in Kasaragod, there are 1,230 families in need of help. The hope is that 540 families have already agreed to shift. Many others believe that they may get a better package with the acquisition of their land for coastal highway projects.

Fishermen from Kannur and Kasaragod say many of them are not happy about leaving their existing spacious homes as the value of their current property can never be compared with the offers from the government. They also fear the takeover of their abandoned property by private investors for tourism purposes.

Fisheries Deputy Director P.P. Ranjini says the department is making all possible efforts to convince the reluctant families about the risk in continuing at the current spot. “They are not supportive of the idea of demolishing the existing houses. If they accept the package, they will have to move out from the existing land,” she points out."

Kerala: Trawling ban divides traditional fishers, boat owners

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/trawling-ban-divides-traditional-fishers-boat-owners/article65459807.ece

"Traditional fishers and trawl boat owners are once again split over the imposition of the 52-day annual trawling ban off the Kerala coast. The Fisheries department has convened a meeting of all stakeholders in Thiruvananthapuram on Friday to discuss issues confronting the fisheries sector as well as to consider the ban.

“The fisheries sector has been going through continuous crises over these years, and strict conservation measures are needed to ensure a stable future for the community of fishers,” said Antony Kurisinkal, the Alappuzha district secretary of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation.

He said the federation was for a 90-day ban and would hold protests in all districts depending on the decision being taken by the Fisheries department after Friday’s meeting. Antony

Ashrayam, a traditional fisherman from Arthunkal, Alappuzha, said the very intention of trawling ban was to conserve resources, which would benefit both trawl boat owners as well as traditional fishers. It is, therefore, meaningless that the trawl boat owners are opposing the annual ban, he said.

Destructive fishing

Jackson Pollayil of the federation said even trawl boat owners were facing shortage of resources, and some operators were also resorting to destructive practices like pair or bull trawling. They deploy boats in pairs and scrap the sea bed with fishing nets killing even juvenile fish.

Fishing Boat Operators' Association secretary Joseph Kalapurackal said considering the serious loss of fishing days on account of restrictions during COVID-19 and on account of weather warnings in 2021, trawling ban may be reconsidered at least for the upcoming season.

Pollution woes

He claimed that fish resources had been affected not so much by overfishing but by pollution of waterbodies, including the backwaters. He claimed that the depth of the Vembanad lake, one of the seats of key fish resources in central Kerala, had come down from 9.6 metres on an average to 1.3 metres with the accumulation of silt and polluting materials like plastic.

He said the government and the marine scientist community should study the situation to reconsider the annual trawling ban. He said Indian fishers were losing precious resources on account of the ban, while foreign operators exploited these assets. Trawling ban has been in effect since 1982 for varying periods in the State, while the Union government has imposed a uniform ban on other coastal States. The ban period is between June 1 and July 31 on the west coast and between April 15 and June 15 on the east coast.

It is estimated that there are 38,000 trawling boats operating off the coast of Kerala, which will come under the ban during the monsoon season. There are also more than 14,300 traditional fishing boats that have been given permits for receiving subsidised kerosene."

Kerala: Fisheries department says fish landings increased due to COVID curbs

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fisheries-dept-says-fish-landings-increased-due-to-covid-curbs/article65459742.ece

"Marine fish landings in the State considerably recovered during 2021–22 to touch 6.02

lakh tonnes due largely to pandemic-induced restrictions on fishing activities and frequent weather warnings that curtailed fishing days. Fisheries department sources said fish landings in the State in 2018–19 were 6.08 lakh tonnes, which fell to 4.75 lakh tonnes in the following year and touched a low of 3.91 lakh tonnes in 2020–21.

The figures have been cited to support the view that resource conservation is the road to protect livelihoods of lakhs of fishermen in the State.

Post-Ockhi scenario

There have been severe restrictions on fishing ventures in open sea since cyclone Ockhi hit Kerala coast in December 2017. The closure of harbours and restrictions on holding open auctions of landed fish had prevented traditional fishers from venturing out into the sea for several months during the first and second waves of the pandemic. Traditional fisheries sector sources claimed that around 100 fishing days had been lost on account of the pandemic and weather warnings.

Measures to conserve

Several measures were adopted to conserve resources. They included imposition of the rule on minimum legal size for any species to be caught and commercially traded. The State government has, on the recommendation of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, notified the minimum legal size for 58 commercially important species that land in the State's coast.

The State as a whole has seen big fluctuations in fish landings, including oil sardines, since 2012, when the total fish landings were 8.39 lakh tonnes. According to data available, the catch of oil sardines, the mainstay of the fisheries sector in the State, dropped to 13,154 tonnes in 2020 against 3.99 lakh tonnes during 2012. The species also ensures food security for the coastal population."

Kerala: Freshwater fish dominate market as sea fish remains scarce

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/freshwater-fish-dominate-market-as-sea-fish-remain-scarce-fish-market-1.7540973

"Freshwater fish seems to dominate the market when the sea fish population has been found depleting due to climate change. As there is a high demand for the farm fish and other fishes caught from rivers and backwaters in the state, the cost also remains high.

Along with the decline in fish population due to climate change, the unexpected rains and subsequent restrictions issued for fishing in the sea added on to the scarcity of fish. Sea fish are currently brought from sea mainly to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Maharashtra. Hence, the fish would turn almost rotten by the time it reaches Kerala. This also led to a surging demand for freshwater fish.

The farmers who invested in aquaculture could earn a better profit by this. The fisheries department has begun a programme for raising fish in the abandoned water bodies of the state. Last year, the department had invested 22 lakh of fish in this manner."

Kerala: Strike brings fishing sector to a standstill in Kochi

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/strike-brings-fishing-sector-to-a-standstill/article65453562.ece

"The fishing sector came to a standstill on Monday with fish workers engaged in both marine and inland fisheries and allied activities striking work demanding, among other things, concessional rate for fuels like kerosene and control over diesel prices. The strike was called by the Kerala Matsya Mekhala Samrakshana Samiti (forum for protection of fisheries sector), which comprises organisations representing both politically affiliated and independent fishermen's unions.

Thousands in poverty

V. Dinakaran, former MLA and chairman of the samiti, said fishermen, those in the allied sectors, and boat operators joined the strike to protest against the continuous rise in the price of fuels like kerosene and diesel, which had made fishing operations financially unviable, plunging thousands of people into extreme poverty. It was the participation of workers, retailers and boat operators which had made the protest a success, he said. Activities at fish landing centres like Chellanam and major fishing harbours like Thoppumpady as well as major fish markets came to a standstill on account of the strike. Mr. Dinakaran, Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, vice chairman of the samiti, and general convener Shery Thomas thanked the fish workers and unions for making the protest and drawing the attention of authorities. The demands raised by the fishing community include supply of kerosene at ₹25 for fishing vessels, recall of road tax on diesel for vessels going out for fishing, recall of policies recently announced by the Union and State governments that hampered the rights of fishing community, increase in the provisions for the fishing community's social and economic security.

Matsyafed functioning

The fishermen's unions have also demanded that the government intervene to make the operations of the apex fisheries cooperative Matsyafed more efficient. The coastal regulation zone rules should be amended to protect the livelihood of traditional fishers. The fishing community also raised objections to the rehabilitation programme 'Punargeham'. The compensation amount should be raised to make the programme more attractive."

Kerala: Voice of the fisherfolk

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/may/12/voice-of-the-fisherfolk-2452424.html

"Thiruvananthapuram's coastal areas have been facing severe sea erosion for the past few years. Many fisherfolk who lost their home to sea attack live in rehabilitation camps. Journalist K A Shaji's new documentary focuses on coastal erosion and debates the idea that Vizhinjam international port construction activities contributed to this.

Titled Stolen Shorelines, the 35-minute documentary tries to capture the life of coastal areas. It voices the concerns of fisherfolk and alleges that port construction activities causes sea erosion. The documentary talks about their trials and tribulations, and struggle to bring this issue to the fore.

Written and directed by K A Shaji, the documentary showcases how fishing villages like Kovalam, Vizhinjam, Veli, Valiyathura, Kallumoodu, Bheemapalli and Muttathara have been affected by sea erosion. Shaji, who used to frequently visit Vizhinjam and other coastal villages to write news stories, wanted to narrate their struggles to a bigger audience.

The documentary has visuals captured over a year worth of conversations with fisherfolk where they talk about their struggles. "Human interventions amplify coastal and environmental degradation. We documented the changes happening in the coastal areas. After speaking to experts, I found that port construction caused it. This issue affects the lives and livelihoods of fisherfolk. It shouldn't be taken lightly," said Shaji.

Environmental activist AJ Vijayan says in the documentary that Vizhinjam isn't a natural port and building an artificial port has led to coastal erosion and accretion. "This causes beaches to erode and affects natural sediment transport. As the construction activities at the port progresses, it will lead to further environmental disasters," said Vijayan.

The documentary will be released on June 5, World Environment Day. It will be screened in Valiyathura in the presence of the coastal community and field experts. Shaji hopes to screen the documentary across the country and generate awareness about the issue. "This is a larger

environmental issue and the documentary was conceived on those lines," says Shaji.

Syed Shiyaz Mirza and Sooraj Ambalathara handled the camera. Kalyani Vallath is the narrator, while Roshni Rajan, Bhavapriya J U, Salini Reghunandan and Archana Kala Sajikumar took care of research and documentation. Kannan Mamoo made the sketches and posters were designed by Shafeek Subaida Hakkim."

Goa: Fishermen will face same fate like Kerala if Sagarmala project not scrapped

https://www.heraldgoa.in/Goa/Fishermen-will-face-same-fate-like-Kerala-if-Sagarmala-Project-not-scrapped-NFF-/189856

"The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) on Sunday cautioned that fishermen from Goa would face situation like Kerala if the Sagarmala Project is not scrapped.

The forum demanded that the government should immediately stop port expansion plans in Kerala.

NFF General Secretary Olencio Simoes said that NFF ended its third State "Machhimar Sangharsh Yatra" at Kerala, where the team visited affected Valiyathura village in Thiruvananthapuram, where nearly 400 families have been displaced because of sea erosion due to dredging of Vizhinjan seaport.

Simoes demanded that the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways should immediately stop port expansion plans in Kerala.

"During the yatra, the NFF team highlighted that Goa's fishermen and coastal dwellers would meet the same fate if the Goa government doesn't scrap Sagarmala plans in the State," he said.

The NFF general secretary also demanded that the Union government should pass the Coastal Rights Bill in order to protect the livelihood of people engaged in or depending on fishing activities.

Meanwhile, the fourth "Machhimar Sangharsh Yatra will be held in Goa on June 16 and 17. NFF Chairperson Leo Colaco, Vice Chairperson K Yellayya and other Union members will visit highly affected areas where fishermen have been deprived of their rights and livelihood."

Kerala: Deep-sea fishing curbs leave fisherfolk, traders in lurch

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/may/20/deep-sea-

fishing-curbs-leave-fisherfolk-traders-in-lurch-2455556.html

"The livelihood of fishermen were hit badly by the India Meteorological Department's recent directive banning deep-sea fishing. Restaurants who sell seafood varieties and online sites that sell fish catch of the day are also struggling with the lack of availability of fish.

Fishing in the sea has been banned until further notice due to the change in wind speed along the coast of Kerala, Lakshadweep and Karnataka. Wind speed, which was at 40-50kmph, could go upto 60 kmph, disrupting the fishing cycle. Lawrence, 65, a Vizhinjam fisherman, told TNIE that he would have normally ignored the warning and went into the sea, but since Cyclone Ockhi hit the Kerala coast in November 2017, he is scared. "I lost several friends and family members. Since then, I don't go fishing in the deep sea when there is turbulence," said Lawrence.

If 100 small boats ventured into the sea by dusk and returned with catch during dawn earlier, barely 10 boats do that now. This is affecting the inventory of small-scale online fish sites badly.An online retailer, who has been selling fresh catch through WhatsApp for a month nowl, told TNIE that that fish from Tuticorin that is atleast a month old is hitting the markets and restaurants now.

"I haven't sold any fish in the last six days. The number of boats bringing fish has reduced significantly. They are charging exuberant prices too. Earlier, I used to buy one basket of mackerel for Rs 4,000. But now, it is priced at Rs 6,000 or more. It is not even economical to buy fish at this point, so I have paused sales till the rains subsede," he said.

Kadaloram restaurant, Vettucaud, is quite famous among fish lovers in the city. Its owner, Saju Ambrose, has been purchasing fish from local beaches like Vizhinjam, Mariyanadu, Veli, Poonthura, Vettucaud, and Shangumugham.

"A week ago, I bought mackerel at Rs 32 - 35 per kilogram. But on Wednesday, I got it for Rs 56. Also, I stopped providing fish head curry (thalacurry) to our clients as it is not economical. The price of one kilo of king fish has gone beyond Rs 1,000," said Saju."

Kerala: Inflation tides turn fishing a costly affair

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/inflation-tides-that-turn-fishing-a-costly-affair/article65417119.ece

"For fishers, going deeper means extra kerosene that has become costlier than petrol.

Fishers feeling the pinch under spiralling fuel prices as traditional vessels require over 100 litres of kerosene

Jomon last ventured into the sea on April 19, only to return with a meagre catch. His traditional craft requires over 100 litres of kerosene for a single trip and the sharp rise in fuel prices has forced him to keep it beached. “We decided to stay off waters when the kerosene price hit ₹124. With the dip in catch, it is a double whammy for the traditional sector,” he says. Though they are supposed to work closer to shore, the lean stock in territorial waters often drive the fishers beyond 12 nautical miles. “Going deeper means extra kerosene that has become costlier than petrol.

Of late, we have been facing a drought-like situation and a steep decline in catch. Nowadays, our daily operating coast outweighs the returns by a considerable margin and if the situation doesn’t change, we will have to look for new livelihood options. We have been fishers for generations and we have never felt so desperate,” he says. Sugunan, an inland fisher from Thekkum Bhagam, says he has been facing an unprecedented crisis. “We operate on country crafts and sell the catch in the village market. After the pandemic, many regular customers have stopped buying fish. This is an area with lower income families and they all are struggling. Many residents lost their jobs during the last two years and their spending pattern has changed,” he says.

This age of inflation

Most inland fishers are feeling the pinch, as they have no wide marketing network to sell the catch. Adding to their woes, many customers now prefer farmed fish available at lower rates. “We have been building a house for the last four years. The prices of construction material are spiralling and I am forced to sell the catch at a loss. Forget completing the house, I am finding it hard to make ends meet,” he adds. Even when fish vending was turning out to be low-paying exercise, Leelamma had not lost hope. Even during the pandemic, she was hopeful and thought the situation would change after the period is over.

However, Leelamma now says fish vending and processing are no more viable options to survive. She now works as a maid. “After a day’s hard work, we make only around ₹300 and the prices of all essential commodities have gone up. Currently, we can’t afford a cylinder of cooking gas and the schools will reopen shortly. We may not be starving, but with bank loans to repay, it is a tightrope walk for us,” she says."

Kerala: Fish merchants deny selling non-edible fish

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fish-merchants-in-kerala-deny-selling-

non-edible-fish/article65397687.ece

"The All Kerala Fish Merchants' and Commission Agencies' Association, representing fish merchants and retailers, has appealed to the Kerala government to change its "attitude" to the community of fish sellers and merchants in the wake of what the association alleged was harassment of the community following "isolated" incidents of seizure of non-edible fish.

State chairman of the association C. M. Shafi said fishermen in Kerala were able to realise fair price for their catch because of the "competitive nature" of fish sellers and merchants. However, fish merchants have been portrayed as exploitative in the past, he alleged.

But the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has denied harassment of any fish merchants, maintaining that routine checks on food items are conducted. Alex K. Isaac, assistant commissioner of the FSSAI for Ernakulam and Kottayam districts, said adulteration of fish using formalin and ammonia have been detected rarely in the districts. The recent inspections in the Vypeen area by the mobile test squad found no instance of use of formalin and ammonia, he added.

A key issue regarding fish is that on many occasions, it is not preserved properly using the desired quantity of ice, the official pointed out.

There were reports in the media about the seizure of around 200 kg of stale fish in Kasaragod recently.

Fish merchants and commission agents have said they had assured the then Health Minister in 2016 that only good-quality fish would be sold in the market. However, they had faced situations which threatened the entire trade in the name of isolated incidents in the past, they said.

Action plan

The association is convening a meeting of fish merchants and sellers at Chavakkad in Thrissur district on May 11 to draw up an action plan for protest with a view to protect the business, Mr. Shafi added.

Meanwhile, the FSSAI squads have continued intensive checks on hotels and eateries. Two squads, one based in Koothattukulam and another based in the Aluva-Kalamassery areas in Ernakulam district have been in the field regularly for the inspections, the FSSAI official added.

The FSSAI authorities seized and destroyed 45 kg of stale fish from different hotels in Ernakulam district on Monday. The food safety authorities also conducted 30 inspections, served eight rectification notices to hotels, two compounding notices for imposing fine and six notices for converting older licenses into registration under the FSSAI."

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Kerala: Scarcity of subsidised kerosene adds to fishermen's misery

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/scarcity-of-subsidised-kerosene-adds-to-fishermens-misery/article65397715.ece

"The disruption in the supply of subsidised kerosene has added to the misery of the fishing community, that is already facing an acute shortage of catch.

Jackson Pollayil of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, an independent federation of fish workers, said the kersone supply situation was "pathetic". He said though around 14,000 fishing boats had been verified to be deserving of subsidised kerosene, the supply had not been smooth so far. A few boats in Ernakulam district were learnt to have received the first supply after the February verification, he added.

Mr. Pollayil said the supply of subsidised kerosene had come down from about 600 litres per month per boat in the 1980s to around a hundred litres per month at present. The scarcity of kerosene, the rise in the price of the fuel in the open market, and a fish drought-like situation had plunged the sector into a deep crisis, he said, as he pointed out that a large quantity of fish needed for the Kerala market was currently being imported from Karnataka, Goa and Gujarat.

Matsya Thozhilalai Aikya Vedhi convenor Charles George said the price of kerosene under the Public Distribution System had gone up to ₹84 a litre, which was unaffordable. The State government has failed in its promise to supply kerosene at lower rates. The budget presented by former Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac had promised to supply the fuel at ₹25 per litre to the fishermen and ₹60 crore was set aside for the subsidy. But, the money had not been utilised for the purpose, said Mr. George.

There are an estimated 32,000 fishing vessels operating off the coast of Kerala. Of them, more than 14,000 vessels had been verified to be deserving of subsidised kerosene. However, the quantum of subsidised fuel was insufficient for sustaining even two days of operations in a month, said Mr. George.

A small vessel required around 2,000 litres of kerosene per month considering 20 days of operations. But the subsidised quantity of kerosene available to each boat was only 129 litres,

he added."

Kerala: Coastal Regulation Zone panel report goes against conservation guidelines

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/may/09/keralas-coastal-regulation-zone-panel-report-goes-against-conservation-guidelines-2451342.html

"The report of the expert committee constituted by the state government to examine and resolve critical issues and promote development of coastal areas under the Coastal Zone Management Plan 2019, prepared under the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification, has triggered a controversy.

Environmentalists and fishermen community have raised concerns over its recommendations and they plan to approach the Supreme Court against the same. The key recommendations of the committee headed by additional chief secretary V Venu with PZ Thomas and P B Sahasranaman as members include a proposal to reclassify 340.10 sq km of coastal land classified under CRZ III to CRZ II to allow development works.

""The Kerala government has notified 175 coastal panchayats as urban areas. The Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority should consider reclassifying these urban areas as CRZ II areas, which will generate large employment opportunities and revenue for the state,"" says the report. Another recommendation is to reclassify 71.85 sq km of pokkali fields and low-lying agricultural land under CRZ II or CRZ III. Such re-classification will enable the local communities to construct houses and carry out economic activities for their livelihood, the report said.

The third important recommendation is to relocate small patches of mangroves with less than 50 sq m area to an identified mangrove land bank. Mangroves in government lands which are having a total extent of 1,000 sq m be categorised as CRZ-I(A).

The buffer zone of 50m is required only where the mangrove vegetation is within government-owned land. No buffer is required in private land holdings, says the report.

""The recommendations, if implemented, will displace the fishermen community and open the coastal areas for real estate groups. Declaring coastal panchayats as town panchayats will lead to unbridled development. Mangroves is an ecosystem that protects the shore and provide breeding grounds for commercial marine species. The proposal to relocate mangroves is foolish,"" said scientist and environmentalist Dr KV Thomas.

""The recommendations have been made by an expert panel which has no experts. The report

gives importance to development and has ignored the environmental aspect. In my opinion, the no-development zone in the coastal areas should be protected while ensuring the livelihood of fishermen,"" said former president of Kerala Sasthra Sahitya Parishad, a people's science movement promoted by the CPM.

""They have infringed on the very purpose of the CRZ notification. The panel considered how to divert the no-development zone ignoring the environmental aspects. We had 70,000 hectares of mangrove forests in Kerala which have shrunken to less than 50 hectares. The proposal to relocate mangroves will lead to the complete destruction of the ecosystem,"" he added. ""Another proposal is to reclaim the pokkali fields. We had 20,000 hectares of pokkali fields which have shrunken to 3,000 hectares,"" said Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) founder vice-chancellor Dr B Madhusoodana Kurup."

Kerala: Safe-to-eat fish is still some distance away

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/safe-to-eat-fish-is-still-some-distance-away/article65389267.ece

"A neat spread of marine fish without ice may not be a rare sight at the markets in hilly areas and rural interiors. But that means the quintessential red flag for any fisher as it is highly improbable to preserve the catch for the long hours needed to transport it from the coast. “If you spot fish without ice in places like Idukki or Wayanad, it simply means the catch is sprayed with formalin. Fish can stay fresh only for three to four hours and it takes longer for the stock to reach parts of districts that lack a coastline,” says Antony, fisher.

For newer chemicals

While the Food Safety department has seized huge volumes of contaminated fish as part of ‘Operation Matsya’, the inflow of stale stock continues forcing the officials to look for the presence of chemicals other than formaldehyde and ammonia. “Formalin is frequently added to harden fish and sell it as fresh catch. The rapid detection kits used by the department can identify the presence of only a couple of chemicals including ammonia, formalin and sodium benzoate. In order to verify if the vendors have switched to any new chemical we are sending around 20 samples to the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) in Ernakulam,” said an official.

From other States

According to fishers, the catch gets adulterated with hazardous chemicals somewhere in the marketing chain. “Fish wholesalers use it to extend shelf life and ensure zero spoilage during

transport. Kerala requires 8 lakh tonnes of fish a year and the maximum domestic catch comes only around 5 lakh tonnes. Kerala is an important market for many fishing States and the consignments from these States reach Kerala after three to five days. The inflow of stale fish will be much higher during the trawling ban period," says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association.

1 kg ice for 1 kg fish

He adds that a considerable percentage of the consumers unknowingly opt for chemical-laced fish as it's cheaper. "While pearl spot from Kerala backwaters costs around ₹900 per kg, farmed variety from Andhra Pradesh is available for ₹350. We need one kilogram of ice to preserve one kilogram of fish and very few people maintain that ratio. Add to it the hot weather and lack of proper storage facilities and the chance for spoilage is very high," he says..

Poor enforcement

Preserving fish with ice requires re-icing the crates in every 24 hours, which means extra money and effort. Most wholesalers try to avoid it, especially if they are transporting large quantities. While they buy in bulk and stock huge quantities, they hardly follow the norms while transporting it. "Fish kept for export also reaches the retail market at times. Enforcement measures that include random inspections on check-posts are often not adequate to prevent the inflow. Though we fine the owners, file cases and destroy the stock, there is no provision to blacklist repeat offenders. They will keep sending the consignments," says the official."

Kerala: Fish famine, livelihood loss because of upcoming Vizhinjam port, say fishers

https://india.mongabay.com/2022/05/fish-famine-livelihood-loss-because-of-upcoming-vizhinjam-port-say-fishers-of-south-kerala/

""Vizhinjam was once known as the harbour of pro-creation," Father Michael, parish priest of Lady of Good Voyage Church in Vizhinjam, Kerala, told Mongabay-India. But today, the reality is different.

Vizhinjam is a coastal region approximately 16 kilometres south of Trivandrum, stretched between Kollam and Kanyakumari in the southern district of Kerala. The seabed in this area is full of rock formations, sandy bottom ridges, floor slopes and sloping ridges, making the space a rich breeding ground for mussels and a variety of marine organisms. At least 12 unique reef systems have been discovered here, say researchers from Friends of Marine Life, an indigenous coastal community non-profit composed of scientists, scuba divers and fishers in south India. In 2016, they carried out a survey of the sea bed of Vizhinjam, to document the biodiversity of the

region. Kumar Sahayaraju, a marine biotechnologist, who was part of the team, told Mongabay-India that the region is “like a forest in the sea.”

“The sea bed is full of sessile and sedentary marine life. There are at least 12 different reefs, forming the perfect habitat for fish to live and breed. And now they don’t have a home,” he said. Father Michael said, “fishers from all the 20 coastal villages surrounding us would come here during the monsoon months to fish.”

This ecologically rich region is also the site of the Vizhinjam International Sea Port, an ‘international transhipment deepwater multipurpose seaport’ that is being developed by Adani Ports as a public-private partnership (PPP) project on a design, build, finance, operate and transfer (DBFOT) basis. The PPP structure is based on a landlord model where land will be owned by the Government of Kerala (GoK) through Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited (VISL), a special purpose vehicle set up to manage the port development.

Vizhinjam International Seaport is an ‘international transhipment deepwater multipurpose seaport’ that is being developed by Adani Ports in a public-private partnership model with the government of Kerala. After going through a series of objections and court cases filed by environmentalists and citizen activists, the port secured all clearances for construction in 2015.

However, over the last seven years, Vizhinjam and its neighbouring villages have witnessed a steep fall in marine biodiversity, a decline in fish catch, loss of thousands of livelihoods, uncomfortable rehabilitations, and a general sense of misery amongst its populace.

Experts warn that port activity will destroy the wadge bank, a unique fertile fishing ground in the ocean, and rich in biodiversity, like a warehouse for feeding fish. There are 20 wadge banks around the world and one of them is situated southwest of the coastline of Kanyakumari in south India.

While the port is soon going to become a reality, and compensations are being provided for livelihood and land lost, the affected people argue it is not enough.

The project has been in the making for a long time. The port’s development was envisaged by the Kerala government in 1999 and the site was chosen primarily because of the geomorphological features of this region — Vizhinjam has a natural bay, a natural depth of 18-20 metres that would allow the parking of cape-size vessels without additional dredging. And it is only about ten nautical miles from the international shipping route of Malacca strait, one of the busiest shipping channels. Capesize vessels are large-sized bulk carriers typically above 150,000 deadweight tonnage (DWT). Due to their large dimensions and deep draughts, they are

suitable to serve only large ports with deep water terminals in the world.

The site seemed like the perfect pit stop for cargo vessels passing by. It is designed to cater to container transhipment besides multi-purpose and breakbulk cargo. The private partner, Adani Vizhinjam Port Private, manages the port including the civil infrastructure, supra-structure (terminal) and provides cargo handling services to the port users.

The construction of the project started in 2015 and it involved reclaiming 130 acres of land from the sea, building a new harbour, a jetty with pillars to allow the parking of capesize vessels, breakwaters running up to three kilometres, and dredging of shipping channels. According to the master plan, the total requirement of the land for the project is about 238 hectares. Of the total land required for the project, about 30 percent of the land is to be used for real estate development in the form of hotels, commercial buildings and residential apartments.

Not that there wasn't any protest against it but after going through a series of objections and court cases filed by environmentalists and citizen activists, the port received all clearances and commenced construction on December 5, 2015. It is now slated to be commissioned by October 2023.

For the people of Vizhinjam, life has been divided into two parts – before the port, and after the port. They say it wasn't as if everything was rosy before the port was constructed. They were sold the idea of a dream destination, that the port will bring them new opportunities, a better, more secure future. But the reality could not be further from this dream.

According to the local people and experts, who are working in the area, Vizhinjam and its neighbouring villages have, over the last seven years, witnessed a steep fall in marine biodiversity, a decline in fish catch, loss of thousands of livelihoods, a rise in the number of fisher deaths, coastal erosion, uncomfortable rehabilitations, and a general sense of misery amongst its populace. For the people, from a harbour of pro-creation, it has become a harbour of desolation..."

Indian fishers in Kerala fear fish famine, livelihood loss from upcoming port project

https://india.mongabay.com/2022/05/fish-famine-livelihood-loss-because-of-upcoming-vizhinjam-port-say-fishers-of-south-kerala/

"“Vizhinjam was once known as the harbour of pro-creation,” said Father Michael, parish priest of Lady of Good Voyage Church in Vizhinjam in the south Indian state of Kerala, told Mongabay-India. But today, the reality is different.

Vizhinjam is a coastal region approximately 16 kilometres south of Trivandrum, stretched between Kollam and Kanyakumari in the southern district of Kerala. The seabed in this area is full of rock formations, sandy bottom ridges, floor slopes and sloping ridges, making the space a rich breeding ground for mussels and a variety of marine organisms.

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Kerala: Rising fuel cost hits fisheries operation

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/rising-fuel-cost-hits-kerala-fisheries-operation/article65378012.ece

"Rising cost of fuel — diesel and kerosene — has hampered the daily operations of Kerala’s traditional and mechanised fisheries sector. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association, said diesel prices have zoomed by about ₹10 per litre in the last one and a half months, forcing many boat owners to cut down operations at Cochin Harbour. The dwindling catch due to global warming is adding to their woes. At 1,500 litres for a three-day fishing venture, the fuel cost alone totals ₹1.5 lakh.

The boat operator has to spend an additional ₹2 lakh towards ice for storage, wages, and so on.

The reduced catch in the territorial waters forces operators to venture deeper into the seas, which requires 3,000 more litres of fuel. The slump in business and rising debt make it difficult for the operations to raise more funds. The neighbouring Tamil Nadu government has extended subsidies on fuel for fishing boats, but the Kerala government has not offered anything yet, Kalapurackal said. He questioned why fishing boats, which operate exclusively on water, were being charged a road cess.

Cut in subsidised allocation

Charles George, president of Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi, said the traditional fishing sector was hit hard by the frequent hikes in kerosene prices and the cut in supply of subsidised kerosene to 26,000 kilolitres for three months from 28,000 kilolitres. The open market price is ₹125 per litre, as against the subsidised rate of ₹80. He contrasted this with the unrestricted supply of subsidised kerosene to the traditional fishing sector in Tamil Nadu. The reduced catch in coastal waters during the January-May period has forced traditional fishing communities to go deeper into the seas, pushing up their fuel requirement.

The association wants the Kerala Government to ask the Centre to restore uninterrupted supply of kerosene at reduced rates for the traditional fishing sector. “Already there has been a raw material shortage for the seafood sector due to a combination of factors, and the present move by boat owners will further hit availability of wild caught varieties from the west coast,” said Alex K Ninan, president of Seafood Exporters Association of India-Kerala Region.

He added that the development comes at a time of surging post-Covid demand for marine products in several overseas destinations. Moreover, the lockdown in several Chinese ports has affected shipping schedules and worsened the shortage of containers. This coupled with high freight cost and congestion at Colombo Port have added to the woes of seafood exporters, he said."

Kerala: In this coastal school, fisherfolk have spent years awaiting rehabilitation

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/school-coastal-kerala-fisherfolk-have-spent-years-awaiting-rehabilitation-

"Stepping into the compound of the Government Upper Primary School at Valiyathura in Thiruvananthapuram, one is met with a rather strange intersection of two worlds. In one of the buildings, students sit in their classrooms, attentively listening to their teachers. In another, scores of families go about their household chores. The UP School, located in the coastal region of Valiyathura around 10 km away from the city, has become a ‘permanent shelter’ of sorts for many area residents who have lost their houses in the recent years due to recurring coastal

erosion, rough weather, and the Cyclone Ockhi of 2017.

"It has been three years since we began our stay in this building. I have seen several deaths and births ever since. Now it seems like we too will end up dying here. We cannot even afford to rent a house, so we have no place to go," says Baby, a fish vendor who began to live in the school building with her family after her house was destroyed in sea erosion. Though some of the families who used to stay with them in the building have been shifted to a flat complex at Muttathara, which was built by the government for the rehabilitation of displaced fisherfolk, many say their names were nowhere to be seen in the list.

There are three buildings in the school compound that have been divided using a sheet. One side comprises two buildings – both used as rehabilitation shelters – while the single building on the other side of the sheet continues to function as the school. This division was made after offline classes resumed for students in November 2021, after a long break owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many families, however, have been living in the school since 2016, when coastal erosion started to become a recurrently destructive affair, rendering their houses unusable. To make things worse, Cyclone Ockhi unleashed catastrophe in the coastal region in 2017, causing even more people to abandon their seaside houses that frequently suffered damages due to the wildly temperamental sea.

Every room in the two 'shelter' buildings of the school is inhabited by two or three families, each comprising three to five people. A big hall has been divided into several parts using bed sheets, with each division serving as a 'house' for one family each. Home appliances such as television and fridge are placed in the corners of the room, and the beds have been arranged in the little space left. Food is also served and eaten in the hall. The only space that allows the children and the elderly to breathe freely is the courtyard outside. "Teenage boys and girls live in the building with no privacy at all. We parents have to always be cautious to ensure that our children do not watch and imitate everything we do. We are scared for our kids' future," Christy, another resident, tells TNM. Earlier, young boys and men used to sleep on the verandah of the third building, which was functioning as the school. However, after the school reopened, this had to be stopped. "When that was the arrangement, we at least had some privacy because half of the residents used to sleep there," she adds.

Most of the men who live here, except the elderly, are fishermen, while some women work as fish vendors to make a living. "We lost our house to sea erosion in 2016, before Ockhi. At the time, there were 19 families living in the school. Now, up to 110 families live here. The number started to go up because rough seas and erosion became a regular occurrence after Ockhi. This is only going to become more frequent in the coming years. The situation in the area is already very intense, so much so that we are not even able to go to work at times," says Christopher,

who has been staying at the school with his family for seven years.

Christopher opines that some families were not added to the list of beneficiaries to be rehabilitated because they were not members of the Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board. "I finally got membership in the Board two years ago. Government officials recently came and collected my family details, so we are hopeful that we will soon make it to the list," he says.

However, according to the authorities concerned, every family that submitted relevant documents had received a flat at Muttathara as part of the government's rehabilitation efforts. "Not everyone who is currently staying in the school lost their houses in sea erosion. Some of them used to live in rented houses. Earlier, a hearing was held to allocate four flats, which were left vacant after rehabilitating the beneficiaries at Muttathara, to people who submit the relevant documents. Even then, some people failed to produce documents," says Sheeba Patrick, a Congress member and former councillor of Valiyathura. Irin Dasan, the current ward councillor, echoes Sheeba's words. "All those who submitted documents got houses. Besides, even if they had lost their title deeds, an authorisation letter from the village office would have been enough for them to be rehabilitated. Some flats were even allotted with former neighbours' testimony alone. We just needed them to confirm that the beneficiaries used to own the house they were living in," the CPI(M) member says, adding that those who are yet to receive houses will be considered in the next phase of the government's rehabilitation project."

Kerala: Kumbalam fishermen are still working in the dark

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/apr/29/kumbalam-fishermen-are-still-working-in-dark-2447624.html

"It has been almost two years since the fish landing centre at Kumbalam (in the first ward, near the panchayat pond) was opened. Unfortunately, the facility still does not have a power connection and the fishermen are forced to work in the dark. Despite repeated requests to the panchayat to install power connection and bear the charges, there has been no development, say fisherfolk.

It is also strange that two other fish landing centres are now functioning in the neighbourhood — one 400 metres away and the other around one kilometre away. Fishermen in the area claim even the initial work for setting up the electrical connection has not started yet.

"The officials at the panchayat said that the funds for the power connection to the fish landing centre is not yet ready. Now, we are planning to get an extended connection from a house nearby. They have agreed to it and we will have to pay a portion of their power bill. At least then, the panchayat authorities will feel the heat," said Sujith P S, CPI local committee member

and AIYF Tripunithura vice-president.

Now, the fishermen bank on torchlights or mobile phones to carry their catch ashore. Heavy works like moving the boats and collecting the catch from the net can be dangerous without ample light. Accumulated silt makes the job tougher. The fishermen also want treet lighting in the area."

Kerala: Shoring up our shores

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/apr/26/shoring-up-our-shores-2446430.html

"With cyclonic storms, sea advancement and rough sea conditions posing constant threat to the coastline in Kerala, the irrigation department has come up with a comprehensive Shore Management Plan for the state. Shankhumukham and Pozhiyoor beaches in the capital are two of the ten hotspots identified by the department for the shore protection plan.

The plan is to come up with suitable sea protection designs to prevent sea erosion and protect the shorelines and help tourism and fishing activities in the state. The department has tied up with the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) for preparing the detailed project report (DPR) for the protection of the identified hotspots. A senior official told TNIE that the NCCR has already come up with a design for the protection of the Kollamcode beach at Pozhiyoor.

“We have already kicked off beach protection work at Chellanam in Kochi — one of the worst-hit coastline in Kerala. The project is being implemented with financial assistance from KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board). Shankhumugham and Pozhiyoor are the other two priority spots identified which are being included in the shore management plan,” said the official. The DPR for Pozhiyoor is ready and NCCR has proposed a sea wall there.

“The interventions are being recommended based on a study on the particular coastline and NCCR has recommended a 1.6km-long sea wall at Pozhiyoor and the project is estimated to cost around Rs 50 crore. The plan is to implement the project within a time-frame of two years,” said the official.

On Monday, a team from NCCR along with officials of the irrigation department visited Shankhumukham and Pozhiyoor beaches. The NCCR has recommended offshore breakwater for Shankhumugham beach. With complaints mounting on the durability of off-shore breakwaters using geotubes, the department is planning for a different approach. The Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) is currently implementing an off-shore breakwater project at Poonthura at a cost of Rs 19 crore.

“Geotube offshore breakwaters are turning out to be a failure in many places. Hence, we have decided to construct an offshore breakwater using stones and concrete armour units. The design of the project is ready and we will submit the proposal to KIIFB within two or three weeks,” the official said.

According to officials, the offshore breakwater project at Shankhumukham is likely to cost more. “The project is going to cost more than Rs 50 crore and it will take two to three years to be completed. A similar project has been implemented at Ullal in Mangaluru,” said the official. The official said KIIFB is trying to get the World Bank or Asian Development Bank to fund the project. “We will be submitting the project to KIIFB and the source of funding is yet to be finalised,” the official added.

A50 cr for constructing 1.6-km sea wall at Pozhiyoor as per NCCR recommendation

Latest development on Monday, a team from NCCR along with officials of the irrigation department visited Shankhumukham and Pozhiyoor beaches. With complaints mounting on the durability of off-shore breakwaters using geotubes, the department is planning for a different approach

A19 cr for implementing the off-shore breakwater project at Poonthura"

Kerala: Boat owners move court against bridge work

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/boat-owners-move-court-against-bridge-work/articleshow/91059386.cms

"A group of boat owners and fish traders in Munambam region has approached the Kerala high court against the proposed Munambam-Azheekode Bridge connecting Ernakulam with Thrissur coastal area. According to petitioners, if the bridge is constructed, the ancient port will be obstructed forever and the sea vessels, including ships, will not be able to enter the port waters.

The petition also says that the fishing boats cannot be plied through the port waters if the bridge becomes a reality. They are also alleging that most of the boats navigating the area are more than 12m height above the water floating level and the proposed bridge has a height of 8.16m at the navigational path of the vessels.

The petition also points out that the navigational paths of boats are on either side of the river as the middle portion of river doesn’t have required depth due to accumulation of sand and soil.

Earlier, when a group of boat owners and fish traders in Munambam opposed the project, the district collector and MLA representing the region had held discussion with the stakeholders and the issue was resolved.

As the authorities are going ahead with the preliminary works of constructing bridge in the area, the fresh protest would likely to further delay the project which received administrative sanction eleven years ago. The foundation stone for the bridge was also laid in 2011. Fishing boat owners' association, deep sea fishing boat operators' association, fresh fish traders' association, fish trade services and mini fisheries harbour Tharak agents in Munambam are the petitioners who have approached the court against the project.

The bridge was a long-pending demand of coastal people in Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. People living in the coastal region have been complaining for a long time about the existing jankar service between Azheekode and Munambam, as the service is being frequently disrupted.

Once the bridge, which is part of the proposed Kasaragod-Thiruvananthapuram coastal highway, becomes a reality, transportation between Ernakulam and Thrissur districts will be easier and people from Ernakulam can easily access the northern districts of Kerala and it would be one of the longest bridges in the state. MLA K N Unnikrishnan has informed that the allegation against the bridge project is baseless and the district collector has already convinced the project details to all stakeholders in the region."

Kerala: Chemical-laced fish sale on rise

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/chemical-laced-fish-sale-on-rise-in-kerala-1.7462833

"Posing a serious threat to the public, a huge quantity of stale and chemical-laced fish is being sold in Kerala. As fish is taken in vehicles without a freezer facility, chemicals are used as preservative.

Fish from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Odisha and Goa reach Kerala market days after despatch. The food safety department officials destroyed over 1000 kg of fish which were found stale and adulterated during inspections. Formalin, Sodium Benzoate and Silver Hydrogen Peroxide are the chemicals suspected to be used on fish. As the government was not keen on conducting inspections for more than a year, a huge amount of chemical-laced fish was taken to Kerala regularly.

Earlier, the food safety department actively conducted inspections at check-posts. ""With

summer, Kerala witnessed a fall in fish production. Hence, a huge quantity of fish is being transported to Kerala from other states,"" said fish vendors. Usually, formalin is used on fish as preservative. It is also suspected that water mixed with Silver Hydrogen Peroxide is sprayed on fish to extend their shelf life. Sodium Benzoate is used to keep the fish fresh and avoid dangerous bacteria. Though there are restrictions on the use of this chemical, most fish vendors do not follow it. Tips to identify rotten fish

The gills of fresh fish look red in colour and natural shape. Compared to stale fish, the skin of fresh fish will have a natural metallic glow. Eyes should be bulging and shiny. Fresh fish will not have a bad smell.

If the fish is fresh, its skin will remain tight when we press on it. Rotten fish skin will not"

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: Efforts on to bring back fishermen held in Indonesia, Seychelles: EAM

https://www.dtnext.in/national/2022/04/24/efforts-on-to-bring-back-fishermen-held-in-indonesia-seychelles-eam

"Indian Missions in Indonesia and Seychelles are closely following with the local authorities the issue of detention of 13 Indian fishermen in those countries and making efforts for their repatriation, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

In a letter to Lok Sabha MP from Kerala, Adoor Prakash, the Minister said eight Indian fishermen, five from Tamil Nadu and three from Kerala detained on the night of March 7-8 by Marine Police of Aceh, for fishing in Indonesian waters. Officials from Indian Consulate General have met the fishermen and they were found to be in good health. Jaishankar said 56 fishermen (except the five captains of the five fishing boats) have been released by Seychelles government on March 22."

Kerala: Fishers hit hard by poor catch, high fuel cost

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/fishers-hit-hard-by-poor-catch-high-fuel-cost/article65350912.ece

"Operators of country boats fitted with outboard engines in crisis. Owners of over 3,000 country boats fitted with outboard engines are heading to a big crisis with the steep hike in kerosene prices and the shortage of its supply at subsidised rates.

To meet the daily consumption needs, many are in a situation to depend upon the black market that charges ₹120 a litre for kerosene. Operators in the field say the quantity now being

supplied at subsidised rates for 9.0 and 20 HP boats is hardly sufficient to meet the requirement. The monthly allotment comes between 130 litres and 180 litres depending on the engine capacity, which will be hardly sufficient to meet even two weeks' requirements, they lament.

Fishermen demand kerosene at ₹25 a litre for boats

The demand to increase the monthly quota with better subsidy benefits is yet to be considered by the government. According to operators, kerosene-fuelled boats will be able to operate profitably only with the availability of fuel below ₹30 a litre. Unable to purchase fuel from the outside market at higher rates, many small-scale fishers are now cutting short their fishing days. No new permits are given. The decline in catch has also hit the confidence of many small-scale operators to borrow money for fuel expenses.

"Most of the country boats fitted with outboard engines do not spend much time in the sea because of fuel scarcity. As the catch is also very low, they are in a tough situation," says N. Viswan, a fisherman from Koyilandy harbour. He points out that the fuel price hike has equally hit larger fishing boat operators as well. Functionaries of the Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association say a State-wide strike is on the cards demanding increased fuel subsidy for diesel-powered boats. They also demand the reinstatement of the diesel quota.

"Now the price of diesel is ₹102 a litre which has made thousands of boat owners worried in the State. Even a subsidy of ₹10 a litre will be of great help to them," says C. Musthafa, secretary of Fishing Boat Owners Association at Beypore. Apart from the fuel cost, expenses for the renovation of boats are also giving a huge financial burden for many operators. Many boat owners in Kozhikode district have already sold their boats to buyers from neighbouring States."

Kerala: Food safety dept swings into action amid stale fish plaints

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2022/apr/21/somethings-rotten-food-safety-dept-swings-into-action-amid-stale-fish-plaints-2444442.html

"With complaints mounting on unsafe fish sold in the state, the food safety authorities launched a state-wide surprise inspection drive at fish markets across the state from Tuesday. The special drive has been launched following the recent complaints of stale fish being sold in Nedumkandam in Idukki.

On Tuesday, the food safety authorities conducted surprise inspections at 329 places and 374 samples were collected from local fish markets across the state. The highest amount of stale

fish was seized in Thiruvananthapuram. The food safety department has deployed night and day squads as part of scaling up surveillance to ensure the availability of safe fish for the public. A senior official of the Commissionerate of Food Safety told TNIE that the department has constituted special squads under every district office to conduct inspections at night auction markets, check posts and local markets in the state.

In Thiruvananthapuram, around 1250kg of decayed tuna fish was seized and destroyed. In addition, 11kg of decayed tuna fish was seized from Kilimanoor market. "We seized around 50 boxes of decayed tuna fish from Nedumangad market. The seized fish stocks were handed over to the health authorities for destroying them properly. The fish was brought from Tamil Nadu and became stale because it was not being stored properly. For storing 1kg of fish fresh, 1kg of ice is required. Because of the humid climate, the decaying of fish gets accelerated. The fish should be stored properly at markets. Unfortunately, the markets in Kerala have no adequate infrastructure," said a senior official of the commissionerate.

The authorities have collected surveillance samples from Amaravila check post and Panchimoodu market on day one of the drive. An official said the markets in Thiruvananthapuram including the night fish markets at Venjaramoodu, Kadambattukonam, TB Junction, Poovar and other day markets at Peroorkada, Kesavadasapuram, Maruthamkuzhy would be under scanner.

Selling sand-laced sea fish is illegal. "The microbial content in the sand would make the fish stale and lack of awareness is one of the main issues we have come across. Hence, we are planning to give awareness classes to sensitise the fish vendors," said the official. It is learnt that post pandemic, many entrepreneurs have ventured into fish business. During 2021-22, the food safety department issued food safety registration to 15,780 outlets and 3,850 food safety licences, while in 2020-21, 16,757 food safety registrations and 3,917 licences were issued. "The number of food safety registrations we have issued was more in the past two years compared to pre-pandemic times. Several new fish outlets have come up in the district post pandemic," said the official.

Testing kits unavailable

Though the state government has launched special drives at fish markets, many of the district food safety offices are facing shortage or unavailability of testing kits for detecting contamination in fish. It is learnt that separate testing kits are available to detect formalin and ammonia in fish.

"The testing kits give instant results and currently these are unavailable. We placed the order

for the testing kits several days back. We need a minimum of two boxes having 100 strips each for each food safety circle. Last year, we procured around 15,000. There is nothing left. The consignment has to come from New Delhi and we have been told that it will arrive in three or four days," said an official of the food safety department, Thiruvananthapuram. Each testing kit costs around Rs 400.

'Local bodies should provide better infra'

According to estimates per month, fish consumption comes to around 80,000 tonnes in the state and the fish industry records a turnover of Rs 15,000 crore per annum. The annual per capita consumption in the state is I25kg Though fish being a staple food item for Keralites, the facilities and infrastructure at the market places are bare minimum or nil. "The vendors don't keep the fish chilled throughout the day due to unavailability of storage mechanism or ice. The situation is worse at market places in panchayat areas. They bring fish from faraway places and other states and this fish is brought to the local market the next day and the chances of decaying is more. The local bodies should take efforts to provide better infrastructure in fish markets," said an official."

Kerala: Warmed up by 1.67 deg Celsius since 1901, says India's first state-level climate report

https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/kerala-warmed-up-by-1-67-deg-celsius-since-1901-says-indias-first-state-level-climate-report-7881053/

"Kerala warmed up by 1.67 degrees Celsius during the past century and this warming trend over the southern state is expected to continue in the coming years, according to a new report, the State of Climate for Kerala – 2021. The climate report, prepared by the Institute for Climate Change Studies (ICCS) under the Kerala State Council for Science, Technology and Environment, was released by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday. This is the first-of-its-kind state-level climate statement prepared for any Indian state. According to the Kerala climate report, the annual maximum temperatures recorded across all the 14 districts here showed an increasing trend between 1901 and 2021, which collectively led to the 1.67 degree Celsius jump over the century.

"This is a statistically significant figure," Dr D Sivananda Pai, senior meteorologist and director, ICCS, told The Indian Express. The annual minimum temperatures in Kerala have also increased since 1901. "The average minimum temperature saw a relatively lower increasing trend, which was 0.42 degrees Celsius/100 years," the report stated. However, the minimum temperatures over Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts showed an exceptional

cooling trend between 1901 and 2021.

The India Meteorological Department, since 2016, has been releasing the annual Climate of India report every January. “But that report’s findings may not be applicable and actionable at regional or state levels. That is where the need for having state or even district-level climate reports arise, for effective planning, performing sector-wise assessments and undertaking future climate studies,” said Pai.

Set up in 2014, the ICCS aims to publish state-level annual climate reports every January, which will act as a ready scientific reference for policy makers, local administrations and climate researchers. The institute, in the coming months, also plans to conduct climate and weather awareness sessions and organise local climate fora in Malayalam.

Since 2018, Kerala has faced repeated extreme heavy rainfall events that have caused massive destruction to hillside properties and establishments. “This may have prompted the state government to take climate studies more seriously,” said an expert. Incidentally, 2021 was Kerala’s eighth warmest year in 121 years, with the annual mean land surface temperature recorded last year being 0.4 degree Celsius above the average. Eight of the 10 warmest ever years, since 1901, over Kerala were recorded between 2011 and 2020, also making it the warmest decade ever.

Kerala is a high rainfall recording state and receives rain during two seasons — the Southwest Monsoon between June and September and the Northeast Monsoon between October and December. Kerala records an average of 2049mm and 450mm of rain, during June to September and October to December seasons, respectively.

But of late, Kerala has been receiving below normal rainfall, as per observations noted since 1901. The average seasonal rainfall (both seasons) over Kerala reduced by 10 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) over the last century. The Southwest Monsoon 2021 had ended with minus 10.4 per cent of the LPA.
Climate scientists said the state’s Southwest Monsoon

rainfall was lower than average for 26 out of the total 122 years since 1901. The state’s worst June to September rainfall performance was recorded in 1981, when the seasonal deficiency was about 57 per cent. The state’s best monsoon season since 1901 was nearly a 100 years ago, in 1924, when the seasonal average was 79.9 per cent of the LPA. During October to December 2021, Kerala recorded its wettest Northeast Monsoon season, touching a seasonal average of 401 per cent above normal.

On the district-wise rainfall trends, scientists said that 13 districts showed a downward trend, with Alappuzha, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts recording significant decline in the rainfall recorded during the crucial June to September months. These districts are known for cultivation of paddy and spices along with extensive fishing and tourism activities. Notably, Idukki was the lone district where rainfall during summer monsoon showed an increasing trend from 1901 to 2021.

Kerala: LPG kits fuel boats and fisherfolks' hopes

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/apr/21/lpg-kits-fuel-boatsand-fisherfolks-hopes-2444510.html

"In a big relief to fishermen devastated by spiralling fuel cost, an LPG kit that can reduce the expense by 60 per cent has been introduced in the coastal sector. A trial run of the LPG kit was conducted in two boats at Chellanam fishing harbour. Fishermen have expressed satisfaction over the performance of the engine. Besides cost cutting, LPG will reduce pollution and improve the performance of the engine.

There are around 30,000 motorised, non-mechanical fishing vessels operated by traditional fishermen in Kerala. These fishing boats use kerosene as fuel and the rising fuel price is causing huge loss to fishermen. The cost of a litre of kerosene, which stood at Rs 59 six months ago, has gone up to Rs 126.

The Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL), in association with Surya's Marine LPG Kits Ltd, introduced the conversion kits to fishermen at Chellanam harbour and conducted a trial run to demonstrate the performance of the engine.

"We are introducing the Horizontal Liquid Off Take (HLOT) cylinder and LPG kits developed by Surya's Marine. This will reduce pollution and fuel cost by 60 per cent. The technology has been well received by fishermen. It will be soon inaugurated by the fisheries minister," said BPCL sales manager (LPG) Sunil Bathula.

The LPG conversion kit will cost around Rs 80,000 and the government is considering to provide subsidy. The cylinders are available in 19 kg, 35 kg and 47.5 kg categories. A 19 kg cylinder will cost Rs 2,256 and the BPCL has promised to ensure the delivery of cylinders at the harbour. A 10 Hp engine normally requires 6 to 7 litres of kerosene for one hour operation, while Suryas Marine claims that one 19 kg LPG cylinder will provide six to seven hours of fishing operation."

Kerala: Fishermen demand kerosene at ₹25 a litre for boats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishermen-demand-kerosene-at-25-a-litre-for-boats/article65334825.ece/amp/

"The Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi will organise a dharna in front of the BSNL office in Thoppumpady on Friday demanding kerosene for fishing boats at ₹25 a litre as well as increase in the quota of the fuel for the fishing sector. The Aikya Vedi leaders said that the State government had, in its election manifesto, promised to provide kerosene to the fishing sector at ₹25 a litre. The independent union fishermen also want the Union government to correct the Blue Economy programme that it has announced.

The fishermen feel that the Blue Economy programme will end up corporatising the maritime sector and alienate the fishing community from their traditional means of livelihood. The fishermen's union said this being the lean fishing season, even traditional boats have to cover long distances to get a good catch.

These expeditions have turned out to be more and more expensive with the price of kerosene prevailing at over ₹120 per litre in the open market. Fishing vessels with 9.9 HP engines are given 129 litres of kerosene at a subsidised rate while boats with engines of 20 HP are given 179 litres per month. The union said a boat would require an average of 2,000 litres of kerosene per month to stay in business."

Kerala: Waves of fuel price hike, apathy rock fisherfolk

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/apr/18/waves-of-fuel-price-hike-apathy-rock-fisherfolk-2443199.html

"Soaring fuel prices, depleting marine resources and frequent storms — the fishing community in Kerala has been struggling to stay afloat amid the turbulent tides. The market price of industrial kerosene that stood at Rs 80 per litre in December 2021 has reached Rs 126. Adding to the woes, the distribution of kerosene permits by civil supplies department has been delayed, while the Rs 25 subsidy from Matsyafed has been pending for the past three months.

"Kerosene is more expensive than petrol now. Around 60 per cent of the fishermen has stopped venturing into the sea as fishing is no more profitable," said Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation president Jackson Pollayil.

"If 100 boats set off for fishing only 50 will get a good catch. The boats that go for coastal fishing will need 100 to 150 litres of kerosene per day, while those going for deep sea fishing need 250 litres. The kerosene price has doubled during the past one year and there is no proportionate increase in fish price," he added.

The inboard and outboard engine craft used by traditional fishermen use kerosene as fuel, while mechanised fishing boats use diesel. “A trawler which went on an eight-day fishing expedition returned with catch worth Rs 5.82 lakh. However, after dividing the fuel price and workers’ salary, the owner suffered a loss of Rs 1.5 lakh,” said Munambam Boat Owners’ Coordination Committee chairman P P Girish.

“The diesel price has crossed Rs 100 per litre and the operating coast has doubled. Most of the fishing boats remain moored at Munambam harbour as trawling is no more affordable,” he rued. An officer at fisheries minister’s office said kerosene permit has been provided to 14,332 country craft and the inauguration of the permit distribution will be held at Poonthura on Wednesday. The permits have been renewed after 10 years to weed out illegal beneficiaries.

“The LDF had promised in the manifesto to provide kerosene at Rs 25 per litre. However, the kerosene price, which stood at Rs 54 per litre, has gone up to Rs 126. The Matsyafed has recommended raising of subsidy from Rs 25 to Rs 50,” he added. According to Matsyafed managing director Dinesan Cheruvat, there has been only a delay of one month in distribution of subsidy.

“We purchase industrial kerosene from BPCL and distribute it charging only Rs 1 per litre as handling charge. Matsyafed distributes 140 litres to country craft, for which subsidy of Rs 25 per litre is credited to the beneficiaries account within a month. The price of PDS kerosene, which stood at Rs 47 per litre a few months ago, has spiked to Rs 81 per litre now. The distribution of PDS kerosene has been affected due to lack of supply from Centre,” he said."

Kerala: Pokkali farmers demand withdrawal of government order

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/pokkali-farmers-demand-withdrawal-of-government-order/article65317774.ece

"Pokkali Samrakshana Samiti, a forum engaged in conserving pokkali rice cultivation, has demanded that the government withdraw its order permitting aquaculture in pokkali fields till April 30, as it will upset the crop cycle of ‘one-rice and one fish’.

The government order said that the time period for fish culture in pokkali fields was extended in 2020 considering the pandemic situation, and that climate change factors had also prompted extension of the time period for fish farming up to April 30 in 2021.

The crop calendar stipulates that rice cultivation is to be carried out between April 15 and November 14 every year. The rest of the year is utilised for brackish water aquaculture, said Francis Kalathunkal, general convenor of the Samiti."

Kerala: Fisheries department procures pearlspot from Kudumbi fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fisheries-dept-begins-procurement-of-pearlspot-from-kudumbi-fishers/article65296165.ece

"The Fisheries department has begun direct procurement of fish, including the Varapuzha variety of pearlspot (karimeen), from fish workers in the Konkani-speaking Kudumbi community in Varapuzha and neighbouring areas. Members of the community are known for their unique way of fishing.

The move has been initiated under the commercial MIMI Fish initiative, which is part of the government's Parivarthanam (transformation) project, one of the objectives of which is to free traditional fish workers from exploitation by middlemen.

The programme also looks at lifting the living standards of traditional fish workers and sourcing fresh fish, which will reach consumers directly. MIMI Fish, which is also a fish ordering application, was launched in August last year as a retail venture with online home delivery in association with the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation. This was after the government floated Parivarthanam in November 2020 as a pioneering eco-sustainable programme for the development of the fishing community, said Parivarthanam project chief operating officer Roy V. Nagendran.

The Kudumbi community settled in Kerala three centuries ago, having migrated from Goa and other parts of the Konkan coast during 1729-58. Initially farmers, they took up fishing in inland waters as a means of livelihood.

Mr. Nagendran said the Kudumbi community practised a unique way of fishing in which tender coconut leaves are strung on ropes like hanging decorations, which are then pulled through water. These white leaves scare the fish to take refuge underwater and then are caught by bare hands by fishers. The Parivarthanam project is also an attempt to preserve this unique way of fishing, he added.

Kudumbis form a large community in Varapuzha panchayat and have been involved in fishing in inland waters off Varapuzha, Kadamakkudy, Ezhikkara, Kottuvally, Cheranalloor, and Mulavukad, said V.P. Denny, who has been involved in helping fishers and is a district

committee member of the CITU."

Kerala: Kerosene price Rs 124 in the market, a heavy blow to the fisheries sector

https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=786285&u=kerosene-price-rs-124-in-the-market--a-heavy-blow-to-the-fisheries-sector

"With the price of kerosene rising to Rs 124 per litre in the market, the fisheries sector has been affected the most. The current price is Rs 92.96. The subsidised kerosene for a boat with a permit per month is 110 litres. This usually lasts for a week. The rest is bought by the fishermen from the common market. Workers complain that the sharp rise in prices in the market will make fishing more expensive.

The new price will come into effect from tomorrow onwards with the arrival of new stock. At present, fishermen get subsidized kerosene at Rs 52.75. The subsidy is Rs 25. The hike in kerosene prices in ration shop will also increase subsidy rate of kerosene rate for fishermen.

The Central Government should give kerosene to the traditional fishermen at lower rates as and when required, said Saji Cherian, Minister of Fisheries.

Kerosene sold commercially in the market is colorless. Blue color is for ration shops. This is to prevent them from reaching the black market."

Kerala: Size of Karimeen, crabs from Ashtamudi lake reduced considerably

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/size-of-pearl-spot-fish-crabs-reduced-considerably-in-ashtamudi-lake-1.7401825

"The size of pearl spot fish (Karimeen) and crabs in Ashtamudi lake has reduced to one third from its earlier size. The average length of a pearl spot fish here was 30 centimetres ten years ago. But, a census carried out in March 2022 suggests that the average length of the same kind of fish has decreased to 20 centimetres. The average weight of a crab caught from the lake also reduced from 1 kilogram to 500-700 gram.

The new data surfaced in the survey conducted jointly by the aquatic biology department of Kerala University and Fisheries Department. The fish caught during the sample fishing were only 20 centimetres in length on an average. The fisherfolk also asserted that the size of the fish have been reduced considerably here. The head of the aquatic biology department Dr K

Bijukumar said the reports indicate overexploitation of fish resources in the lake. The team has found that prohibited varieties of fishing nets like small mesh size nets are used for fishing at Ashtamudi lake."

Kerala: Fisheries sector showing positive signs

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fisheries-sector-showing-positive-signs-cm/article65290096.ece

"With fish production increasing to around six lakh tonnes in the last fiscal, marine fisheries sector in the State is showing positive signs, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said. He was virtually inaugurating four fisheries stations in Alappuzha, Thrissur, Malappuram and Kasaragod districts on Monday.

"The marine fish production in the State stood between 5.5 lakh and 6.5 lakh tonnes until 2010. But since then the production declined drastically. Kerala, which once held the first position in fish production, now stands at fourth place. However, the interventions made by the State government are helping to increase the production once again," Mr. Vijayan said.

The Chief Minister said the government was committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of people employed in the fishing sector. "The government has launched three marine ambulances and 11 rescue boats. Besides, 65 trained lifeguards have been deployed. To coordinate rescue missions, a master control room has been opened at the Fisheries Directorate along with regional control rooms at Vypeen, Vizhinjam and Beypore," he said.

With the four new stations, the number of fisheries stations in the State has increased to nine. Besides effectively implementing the Marine Fishing Regulation Act, fisheries stations will go a long way in coordinating rescue efforts at district level."

Kerala: Steep hike in kerosene prices hit fishers hard

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/steep-hike-in-kerosene-prices-hit-fishers-hard/article65287296.ece?homepage=true

"The steep hike in kerosene prices has come as one more cruel blow for the traditional fisherfolk in the State who have been struggling due to various issues including the dwindling catch in recent months. The price of kerosene increased by ₹19 per litre from ₹104 to ₹123 two weeks ago. The Matsyafed used to supply this to fisherfolk with a ₹25 subsidy per litre, which is transferred to the account of the card holder at the end of the month.

On Saturday, the price of the kerosene supplied to the State Civil Supplies Corporation was

also increased from ₹59 to ₹81 per litre. As a part of the supply to fishers through the Matsyafed comes through this source, the latest increase is also bound to hit them. The price of kerosene supply to the Civil Supplies Corporation was at ₹22 per litre as recently as in 2020. On top of this, the Union government has also reduced the supply of kerosene to Kerala by 40%. Earlier this year, the Matsyafed had reduced the amount of kerosene provided per permit every month from 129 litres to 89 litres due to the reduced supply, forcing many fishers to depend on the black market for kerosene.

""The subsidised kerosene that we get now is insufficient even for a single fishing trip of 35 to 40 kilometres. I have three boats, with 5-6 workers in each. Now, we manage to get out one or two boats. Till last year, the expense for a fishing trip from afternoon to the next morning used to come to around 7,000. Now, it has increased to ₹10-12,000 due to the hike in kerosene prices. Quite a few have stopped going out to the sea because losses are mounting. If we don't get a good catch after spending so much on fuel, we will be forced to borrow money to sustain,"" says S. Anthony from Valiyathura in Thiruvananthapuram.

Across the State, there are 25,000-30,000 permit holders who can purchase kerosene from the Matsyafed's kerosene pumps. A drive for verification of cards was conducted recently after several years.

""Demand has certainly fallen with the hike in prices. Our pump usually witnesses sales of 1 to 1.5 lakh litres in the normal months, with dips in the lean season. We can directly see the hardships faced by the fishers who despite the hike, sometimes take risks and end up in debts. The Matsyafed purchases the bulk of its kerosene at market prices and provides it at a subsidy. The increase in prices of the kerosene provided through the Civil Supplies Corporation will further make it hard for the Matsyafed,"" says the manager of kerosene bunk on condition of anonymity.

Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, in a statement on Sunday, said that the Union government was challenging traditional fisherfolk in the State with the drastic hike in kerosene prices. The State would require approximately 2 lakh kilolitres of subsidised kerosene for the traditional fishing boats annually. However, with the constant cuts in supply of subsidised kerosene from the Centre, the State was unable to meet even 10% of this. Though two letters were sent to the Union Petroleum Minister to increase the kerosene share, there had been no positive response, he said.

Food and Civil Supplies Minister G.R. Anil said that he would meet the Union Petroleum Minister in Delhi to demand for an increase in kerosene supply to the State. Kerala had, unlike some other States, collected its entire share of kerosene in the previous years. Hence the 40%

cut in its share this year was unjustifiable, the Minister said."

Kerala: Buying new boats or renewing license not an easy option for boat owners

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/buying-new-boats-or-renewing-license-of-existing-ones-not-an-easy-option-kerala-fishing-boaters-1.7389665

"Many boat owners in Kerala are facing crisis as buying new boats or renewing license is not an easy option for them.

They neither have lakhs to buy new boats nor could manage funds to complete maintenance of their existing boats, so as to comply with fisheries department's license renewal regulations. The ground reality is that half of fishing boat owners in the state are operating without license. Fisheries department is scrutinizing whether the state government's mandate on operational validity of boats are properly followed. The department is dismissing the renewal requests if boats do not comply with required formalities.

Though the order on limiting operational validity was issued two years before, the fisheries department until last year used to allow license renewal. According to official records of the department, more than half of the fishing boats have expired their respective operational validity period and are aging. Fisheries department's mandate limit the operational validity period of boats made up of iron to 15 years. While the operational validity period of boats made of wood and plywood are 12 and 8 years, respectively. As of now the fishermen are not restricted even if their license is not renewed.

But they are a worried lot because they get insurance coverage only if license is valid. If authorities like Coast Guard intervene for verification, then punitive procedures can be expected. "Until last year they allowed renewal of license. However, this year fisheries authorities informed that renewal cannot be done," says Basheer of Chavakkad's Munakkakadavu. Basheer says the cost of the boat was Rs 11 lakhs. Buying new boat will cost around Rs 40 lakhs. According to Basheer, people like him cannot afford that. Most of the boat owners in Kerala share the same plight of Basheer. Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association state president Mathias Peter said that licenses are not getting renewed as the fishers are just commoners. Meanwhile, fisheries department deputy director M.Thajudeen informed that the order concerned has been issued for the safety of people involved in the occupation."

Kerala: Fisheries Protection Committee formed

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fisheries-protection-committee-formed/articleshow/90529053.cms

"The Kerala Fisheries Protection Committee has been constituted to formulate organized programs to address the issues facing the workers in the fisheries sector, including new legislation. The new conservation committee was formed by representatives of various organizations working in the fisheries sector. The committee vowed to work for the welfare of the fisheries sector beyond party politics.

A common minimum program was formulated for the protection of the fisheries sector. It called for the withdrawal of the KMFR Act Amendment Act of 2018, the Fisheries Procurement, Marketing and Quality Management Act of 2021, the Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Act of 2021 and making new laws respecting the views of the fisheries trade unions and stakeholders.

The committee has nominated former MLA V Dinakaran as chairman and Sherry Thomas as convenor. It sought the strengthening of the cooperative movement in the sector and an increase in full benefits under the fishermen's welfare fund. The fisheries sector should be exempted from the Coastal Regulation Act and the tourism projects should be implemented with participation of the fishermen community, it said."

Kerala: 5 marine species identified for MSC certification

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/5-marine-species-identified-for-msc-certification/article65260117.ece

"Five commercially important species, including Karikadi shrimp, have been identified for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification from Kerala in a pre-assessment conducted by the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) in collaboration with the World Wide Fund (WWF) India and other research organisations.

Under two consortiums, the process is expected to move towards full assessment under different fishery improvement programmes (FIP). "Squid, cuttlefish, octopus, and two varieties of marine shrimp are the species identified. In the pre-assessment we found some gaps in different aspects, including fishery management, and these will be addressed through the two fishery improvement programmes," says Vinod Malayilethu, Associate Director, Marine Conservation Programme, WWF-India.

"We feel that these five species can move towards full-assessment by 2024-25 and we have started stakeholder consultations as part of the process. Fishers are cooperating since they are currently experiencing a resource crunch and this comes as a major step towards building

sustainability," says Mr Malayilethu.

In order to get certified every fishery must satisfy the three core principles of MSC Fisheries Standard, including sustainable stocks. The exploitation must be environment-friendly so that it will not impact other species and habitats in the marine ecosystem. Effective fisheries management is also a crucial factor when it comes to improving and maintaining the stock status.

"Though the certification is voluntary, importing countries are demanding it. There are many countries that import certified products only and though it's not mandatory now it will soon become a benchmark. Anticipating the situation, we should stay prepared," says K.K. Appukuttan, marine fisheries expert and former scientist with Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

He says that currently yellow clam is India's only MSC certified product. "In Tamil Nadu, the certification of export-oriented blue swimming crab is in the last stage. Many other States and Lakshadweep are also at the different stages of the process," he says.

Since the products from a sustainable fishery will fetch premium price in global market, SEAI is keen to obtain the certification for multiple species with export value.

"The fishery improvement programme will be a gradual process that can be completed only with the cooperation of various stakeholders including the government. Sensitising the fishers and introducing sustainable fishing practices will be part of it," he says. Switching to a new harvesting strategy will require a lot of sensitisation, especially when most trawlers haul to shore a considerable volume of trash along with the catch.

"We understand that the certification will bring good export earnings, but we also require some feasible management options to keep the sector afloat. We have communicated our doubts and anxieties over eliminating bycatch since we have no system for that right now," says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association."

Kerala: Yet another trouble for fisherfolk as scorching summer affects catch

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/yet-another-trouble-for-kerala-fisherfolk-as-scorching-summer-affects-catch-1.7372300

"Diesel price hike and jellyfish menace have been affecting the catch of fisherfolk in Kerala. Amid this comes yet another trouble, scorching summer.

Usually, in summer, the catch will be less. However, fisherfolk claims this year their situation is even bleaker. According to them, this summer, the availability of fish in the sea here has significantly reduced in an unprecedented manner. This situation is affecting the earnings of individuals involved in fish catching in boats (including large inboard boats), traditional canoes and all other types of fishing vessels. They all are in dire straits. If they decide not to go fishing, the debt will raise. On the other hand, those are going is not getting catch worth to even meet the fuel cost. A fish boat of medium size requires at least 1,000 litres of diesel in a week. From the catch, the operators are not able to meet expenses like wages and food. It is learnt that many prefer not to operate boats for fishing.

Meanwhile, the jellyfish menace is also troubling the fisherfolk. Jellyfish not only damages fishing nets but also cost time of the fisherfolk in segregating it from the catch. According to Dr PR Jayachandran, a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Marine Sciences under Cochin University of Science and Technology, during the summer season fish tend to move to regions where heat is less."

Kerala: Frequent hike in kerosene prices irks traditional fishers

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/frequent-hike-in-kerosene-prices-irks-keralas-traditional-fishers/article65252401.ece

"The intermittent hike in kerosene prices has put Kerala's traditional fisherfolk in a crisis. According to them, the hike in fuel prices which are ruling at ₹123 per litre from the ₹96 per litre in January, has forced them to dole out more for their daily fishing activities. Charles George, President of the Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (TUCI), said the unavailability of fish in the coastal waters due to sea drought, especially during between January to May has prompted traditional fishermen to venture into deep seas for their catch and it requires more fuel for their daily operations.

The subsidy for kerosene through PDS and the State government agency Matsyafed has so far helped them to a certain extent from the ill effects of steep hike of kerosene prices. But the government has stopped paying subsidies for kerosene in the last one and a half month, he said. At present, fishing boats with 9 HP are getting 129 litres of kerosene on a monthly basis, while 20 HP boats with 179 litres. This is insufficient and will not last for a day's operations, he said, adding that the frequent rise in kerosene prices and its non-availability coupled with fish scarcity reportedly due to climate change issues has put the fishing community in a mess.

Qouta for fishing sector

The association has sought urgent intervention of the government to retain the kerosene subsidy

and ensure its uninterrupted availability by fixing a quota for the fishing sector.Matsyafed should be entrusted as the wholesale dealer to supply kerosene to the fishing sector. He said the Kerala Government in the last year's budget had allocated ₹60 crore to provide kerosene to the fishing community at ₹25 per litre. However, the latest budget has not considered the allocation made last year. The association has threatened to go on an indefinite agitation across coastal areas until their demands are met."

Kerala: Harbours in Kozhikode yet to have kiosks for local buyers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/harbours-in-kozhikode-yet-to-have-kiosks-for-local-buyers/article65237335.ece

"Despite the completion of various major development projects, fishing harbours in Kozhikode district are yet to have convenient spaces for the public to purchase fresh stock of fish at affordable prices. Special kiosks for the public as promised by the authorities are yet to come up at the harbours, thus reserving spaces meant for the facilities for wholesale traders to conduct business.

Though there are five harbours in the district, not a single kiosk is functional or under construction. As a result, individual buyers are forced to purchase huge quantities of fish to avail benefits, as selling small quantities is hardly an option for a majority of traders.

As far as small-scale buyers are concerned, there is little option to purchase premium category fish, as such stock directly goes to large-scale traders doing export business or those who control wholesale trade in the open market. The stock available for the public mostly comprises low-cost fish like sardine and mackerel, they said.

"Though there were promises aplenty to open special kiosks for the public, we are forced to purchase fish in highly unhygienic surroundings. Auctions are conducted in a crude manner by keeping heaps of fish on dirty surfaces," said V. Sandhya, a housewife who often visits the Puthiyappa harbour. She pointed out that there was no fair calculation of prices, with sellers doing it in a primitive way with no logic at all. Though Matsyafed has opened a few outlets in the city to sell fresh stock directly collected from harbours, the price factor remains a concern.

Meanwhile, local trade union leaders claimed that there were many sellers at harbours to cater for local buyers. "Many buyers approach them for a cost-effective deal. Despite the absence of kiosks, these sellers are doing good business," they said. At the same time, there are buyers who contest union leaders' claim that small-scale sellers have been charge market rate for the stock with no option to bargain. "We need kiosks controlled by self-help groups, as it will streamline the system," said Valiyil Satheesan, a resident of Eranhikkal. He added that people

were not so keen to purchase fish in unhygienic surroundings."

Kerala: Fisherwomen steady biz under Theeramythri project

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/mar/21/fisherwomen-steady-bizunder-theeramythri-project-2432338.html

"The alternative livelihood initiatives for fisherwomen have managed to beat the hurdles posed by the Covid pandemic, enabling business worth over Rs 63 crore during the previous financial year.

Around 6,000 fisherwomen from 10 districts are part of the small business units started with government support. There are 1,578 small business units under Theeramythri, a project managed by the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) — a body registered under the Fisheries Department —since 2010.

Kerala: State to strengthen cooperative bodies in fishing sector

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/state-to-strengthen-cooperative-bodies-in-fishing-sector/article65237715.ece

"With an aim of protecting the interest of fishermen and ending the fleecing of middlemen in the fisheries sector, the State government has decided to strengthen the cooperative bodies in the sector, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said.

Replying to a question during the question hour in the Assembly, Mr Cherian said the Kerala State Cooperative Federation for Fisheries Development (Matsyafed), the apex cooperative in the fishing sector, would engage more cooperative bodies in the auction of fish catches by providing basic infrastructure to these bodies to store the auctioned fish.

This would enable the State to ensure better remuneration to fishermen by reducing the intervention of middlemen in the markets. Otherwise, the fishermen would be at the mercy of these middlemen once the catch landed on the coast. Matsyafed also had plans to start fish booths in 140 constituencies in the State. At present, the fish mart of Matsyafed and franchise of fish mart taken by the Cooperative department had presence in 52 consistencies in the State, he said.

Further, the State government had taken steps to identify suitable plots in 88 constituencies to launch fish marts, he said. The sanction for refurbishing 51 fish markets at a cost of ₹120.57 crore from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) had been issued.

Further, the Kerala Coastal Area Development Corporation had received permission to construct 39 modern fish markets with the financial assistance from National Fisheries Development Board and various Central schemes in the State, the Minister said."

Kerala: Virus outbreak worries shrimp farmers in Kochi

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/virus-outbreak-worries-shrimp-farmers-in-kochi/article65224086.ece

"Shrimp farmers in Ernakulam district have expressed concern about the outbreak of what they called was the White Spot Syndrome Virus in farms across the district and the devastating effect the disease could have on cultivation during the current season.

K.X. Sebastian, general secretary of Kerala Aqua Farmers' Federation and a shrimp farmer based in Kottuvally, near Paravur, said the disease was spotted in some of the aqua farms about a fortnight ago and it had spread rapidly, threatening about 4,000 hectares of aquaculture in the district. Shrimp aquaculturists have reported substantial loss of crop over the last week, he claimed.

Shrimp farming is associated with pokkali rice cultivation in the coastal districts of Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur. There are around 6,000 hectares of pokkali rice fields in these districts. The pokkali rice is a unique variety of salt resistant rice that is grown in the coastal areas during the monsoon season. The rice variety has found a place in the geographical indication registry for its uniqueness.

Shrimp farmers mostly grow black tiger shrimp and production is around 500 kg to 800 kg per hectare while scientific methods can increase the production about four times as it has happened in States like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Tamil Nadu, he added.

Mr. Sebastian said the disease in shrimp farms had been spotted in Ezhikkara, Varappuzha, Kottuvally, Kadamakkudy, Mulavukad, Kumbalangi and Pananghad. Sources in the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies said samples had been collected from some of the farms in Thrissur and they were under study."

Kerala: Fishers to launch state-wide protests

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-to-launch-state-wide-protests/article65227796.ece

"Hit by the hike in fuel prices and many boats losing licence after the joint inspection of Fisheries, Civil Supplies and Matsyafed officials, fishers will launch statewide agitation

demanding immediate measures to address the crisis. According to traditional fishers, civil supplies department has brought down the quantity of subsidised kerosene citing scarcity due to limited allocation from the central pool. They also allege conspiracy behind denying license to hundreds of boats after the inspection to issue permits and the subsidised fuel is hardly enough to operate the boats.

"They are not supplying kerosene despite having stock and many of us are struggling without fuel with spot subsidy. While a kilogram of mackerel will fetch us only Rs 30, we have to spend Rs 106 for kerosene and Rs 94 diesel. Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation will be conducting a sit-in protest in front of secretariat on March 17 with empty kerosene cans," said Jackson Pollayil, president.

While the fishers want to solve the issue at the earliest, they also demand the immediate implementation of a 60 crore-subsidy scheme announced two years back. "It was announced in the last budget presented by Thomas Issac, but no step was taken to implement it.

The authorities are coming up with technical reasons and there are also some interdepartmental conflicts between Fisheries and Civil Supplies. We have already suffered significant losses and if this continues we will not be able to survive," he adds. The fishers also point out that Kerala is the only state that is not supporting the sector while neighbouring States are providing fuel at a subsidised rate. Fisheries Department had recently conducted a one-day joint inspection of vessels and engines using kerosene as fuel in all nine coastal districts to issue permits.

After the inspection only engines bought within the last 10 years were issued permits and the license of several boats were cancelled. "Fishers in the traditional sector use engines for a longer duration and denying us permit based on the date of purchase will only add to our woes. We have reduced the number of trips of late and some boats are not even venturing into the sea as they can't afford the fuel. We need redressal measures at the earliest," says K.Andrews, fisher."

Kerala: Fishers term budget 'highly disappointing'

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fishers-term-budget-highly-disappointing/articleshow/90177807.cms

"Expressing strong disappointment at what they termed "highly disappointing", the fishermen unions said the state budget has not looked at the core crisis the fisheries sector had been facing for the last five years. The fall in the catch of Indian oil sardine in the last five years has led to a loss of nearly Rs 10 crore in the fisheries sector in the state.

"We were expecting modernization of cold storage facilities in fish landing centres and fishing harbours so that fair pricing can be done. While the government claims that it has allocated Rs 37 crore more than last time, it is inadequate when looking at the crisis in the sector. We had sought a fisheries package that has not been considered at all," said Charles George, state president, Kerala fish workers forum.

George alleged that the fishers were not called for pre-budget discussions even though they were the major stakeholders. The budget allocated Rs 240.60 crore for various schemes in the fisheries sector, which is Rs 37 crore more than the previous year's allocation. Rs 5.50 crore has been allocated for sea safety of fishermen.

George said that the increase in fuel subsidy, which was promised to the sector when the government came to power, hast been implemented. The budget has failed to be an alternative to the 'Blue Economy' project of the Centre, which will also affect the fisheries sector, he added."

Kerala and Tamil Nadu: 41 fishermen detained in Seychelles, Indonesia

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2022/mar/10/41-indian-fishermendetained-in-seychelles-indonesia-2428461.html

"As many as 41 fishermen, from Kanniyakumari district and other states, were detained in Seychelles and Indonesia on Monday. Sources said 33 fishermen from Kanniyakumari, Kerala and other states, in three boats, had ventured into the sea from Kochi harbour on February 22. They were detained in Seychelles. "The fishermen were in three boats- Dono, Infant Jesus and St Snabaga Arulappar. The owners of the boats were from Chinnathurai and Poothurai in Kanniyakumari district," said International Fishermen Development Trust President P Justin Antony.

Justin said due to bad weather their boats had drifted away from the international borders and they were detained by Seychelles authorities on March 7. The fishermen were kept on the boats and the captains of the boats were taken to the police station for questioning. He urged the Indian authorities and the Indian embassy in Seychelles to take efforts for their release. In this regard, Justin sent a memorandum to Indian authorities, including the Minister for External Affairs and Indian Embassy in Seychelles on Wednesday.

Following his memorandum, Indian Embassy in Seychelles authorities replied, "High Commission of India in Mahe, Seychelles is providing assistance to the fishermen from 07 March 2022. Seychelles authorities are giving food and water to the fishermen in presence of our Consular Staff. We are also assisting the fishermen with communication. Official

procedure/investigation by the Seychelles authority has been initiated".

Meanwhile, South Asian Fishermen Fraternity(SAFF) general secretary Father Churchil said 8 fishermen from Tamil Nadu and Kerala were detained by Indonesian authorities. He said they had gone for deep-sea fishing in a mechanized boat 'Blessing' from Port Blair Fisheries Harbour. They were arrested by Indonesian authorities on March 7 for crossing the Indonesian sea border and for fishing in Rusha Island, Andaman. The fishermen were detained for legal proceedings. SAFF sent a memorandum to the Indian authorities to take steps for their release."

Kerala: Slips to fifth position in seafood exports while India sees remarkable boost

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/kerala-slips-to-fifth-position-in-seafood-exports-while-india-sees-remarkable-boost-in-export-level-1.7316813

"As India is making headways in the export of seafood products, Kerala has slipped to the fifth position. The country had recorded a 25 per cent increase in the export of seafood last year. The exports came up to Rs 47, 200 crores. There was a 65 per cent increase in prawns export alone.

Meanwhile, Kerala saw exports worth Rs 4,800 crore. Out of this, almost 65 per cent of fish were brought from other states. Andra Pradesh came first on the list with exports worth Rs 26,000 crore. The states including Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal are also ahead of Kerala. Kerala was ranked first in seafood exports from 1950. The state lost its glory in the export business by 2005. Kerala has the most number of fish processing centres in the country. The companies under the central government related to the fish export sector including MPEDA, CMFRI, CIFT, CIFNET, and Netfish are in Kerala. Kerala also has the most skilled workers in the fish processing sector. Keralites are training workers from other states in fish processing. Alex Ninan, Seafood Exporters Association President said that the shortage in availability of fish affected Kerala's export.

The hike in the price of diesel also affected fishing drastically. Kerala is depending on its neighbouring states to collect sea fish for a long time now. The export levels took a hit due to the non-availability of containers and hike in its charge. It is reported that many of the fish processing centres in Kerala are not operational now."

Kerala: Fall in number of vessels recommended for kerosene subsidy

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fall-in-number-of-vessels-recommended-for-kerosene-subsidy/article65184173.ece

"The number of vessels recommended by the State Fisheries Department for subsidised

kerosene supply has come down by more than 1,500 across the State compared to 2015 when the last estimate was taken. Fishers' unions said the fall could be attributed to diminishing returns from fishing expeditions as well as stricter rules being implemented by the government, which said only vessels 10 years old or less would be eligible for consideration for supply of subsidised fuel supply.

A total of 14,169 vessels have been recommended for subsidised fuel supply in the inspections held on February 27, which is a big fall from 15,678 in 2015 when the last count was taken. Though Ernakulam district has seen a substantial rise in the number of vessels recommended for subsidised kerosene supply, fishers said there was a big fall in returns from fishing ventures.

The district has seen the number of vessels being recommended for subsidised kerosene supply from 250 in 2015 to 493 this year. Jackson Pollayil, a fishers' union leader of the Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, an independent union, said the increase could be attributed to new investments as well as expectations of better returns in the future. However, he said the plight of traditional fishers continued to be dogged by a fish drought-like situation.

He said fishing was now more and more marked by more expenses to catch less. Each expedition was more costly while the returns were much less, he said, pointing to the cost of fishing ventures and the diminishing returns.

Fishing union leaders such as Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi had called for a special kerosene package for the sector considering its vast contribution to the export business of the country. He said the recent rise in the price of diesel on account of the agriculture infrastructure and development cess could hurt the fisheries sector."

Kerala: Housing Rehabilitation in Coastal Kerala through Fishers' Perspective

https://www.epw.in/journal/2022/9/commentary/contested-relocations.html

"Rehabilitation is always a challenging project. This article is an attempt to analyse the process of housing rehabilitation among the coastal community through the perspectives of traditional fishers.

Kerala has a coastal line of 590 kilometre (km), out of which around 350 km are under the severe threat of coastal erosion and vulnerable to a range of hazards. It is the fourth most extensive coastline of India's 8,118 km sea coast. The consequences of hazards, such as floods, tsunami, sea wave formations, coastal erosion, cyclones, and high power tides have affected the lives and livelihoods of the coastal communities in the state. The never-ending physical and social vulnerability makes them a consistent tagline of "outlier" from the so-called achievements of the state (Kurien 1995). Landlessness, poor housing, relatively high infant

mortality and maternal mortality, low level of life expectancy, worsening sanitary conditions, adverse female–male ratio, poverty-induced disease, to name a few continue to beset these groups (GoK 2011).

The Government of Kerala (GoK) has been a front runner in social innovations and introduced a series of fishery interventions to better their socio-economic position. Housing is one area of innovation that has been incorporated in the policy and programme of rehabilitating the fishers from the disaster-prone area, especially those living within 50 metres (m) from the high tideline (HTL). Before this, the fisheries department has delivered housing needs under the two lakh and four lakh housing schemes, the 10 lakh housing rehabilitation project, the Ockhi house scheme and finally, the house repair scheme (GoK 2020a)....

Kerala: Government has launched an eco-friendly scheme to convert fossil fuel-run fishing boats into LPG-driven vessels

https://www.outlookindia.com/national/soon-fishing-boats-in-kerala-to-run-on-lpg-news-184331

"Kerala government has launched an eco-friendly scheme to convert fossil fuel-run fishing boats into LPG-driven vessels. As part of the socio-economic development project Parivarthanam, an initiative of the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT).

Minister for Fisheries, Harbour Engineering and Culture Saji Cheriyan on Friday reviewed the trial of LPG in fishing boats at Vizhinjam near here. The Department of Fisheries said the trial showed that fuel cost could be saved by 50-55 per cent by using LPG.

""The trial was conducted in association with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL), which has developed a specially-designed cylinder customised for use in fishing boats,"" the department said in a press release. Emphasising the need for cost-effective and sustainable practices, Cheriyan said the trial revealed that fisherfolk can save costs.

""Fishermen face a host of issues like high fuel cost and lack of adequate catch due to depletion of marine resources. The shift from fuels like kerosene and petrol to LPG in traditional fishing boats will bring down the steadily increasing operational cost borne by fishermen," the Minister said in the release.

The research and development (R&D) centre of HPCL, in collaboration with Pune-based Vanaz Engineers Limited, developed the customised LPG kit exclusively for LPG-powered outboard engines. According to Roy Nagendran, the CEO of Parivarthanam, the use of LPG in

boats would reduce environmental pollution. ""A boat powered by a 10 HP engine normally requires six to 10 litres of kerosene for one-hour operation. The wastage of fuel like kerosene is also high as around 20 per cent of it flows out into the sea. A 2.5 kg LPG kit is enough for the one-hour operation of a boat. When compared to the cost of fossil fuels, fishermen will benefit substantially from the shift. Moreover, more than one engine can be connected from a single LPG kit,"" Nagendran said.

The outboard motor (OBM) using kerosene/petrol can be easily converted into an eco-friendly and cost-effective fuel, and the LPG conversion kit can be connected to the OBM without any major changes to it, the department said. Fishermen can utilise the existing engines to attach the conversion kit without incurring any extra cost. Widespread use of kerosene in outboard engines often causes the unburnt fuel to be flushed out into the sea. When these boats operate in inland waters, there would be an adverse impact on the ecosystem and aquatic life, the release said. The LPG kits have been designed specifically for the OBM considering requirements like speed, safety, ease of use and savings.

Kerala: Regulations needed in trawl nets

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/regulations-needed-in-trawl-nets/articleshow/89675135.cms

"Amid huge shortage in fishing catches, there's an urgent need to look and regulate the trawl fishery, which is also contributing to the growing concern in the fisheries sector, according to a study by the researchers of the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) and Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences (Kufos).

The study calls for an urgent need for strict implementation of regulations about vessel size, engine power, size of the trawl, codend type and mesh size. Periodic inspection is the need of the hour, says the study 'Structural change in the mechanised trawl fishing fleet of Kerala', which was presented at the recently concluded annual conference on sustainable ecosystems organized by the department of aquatic biology, Kerala University. The study was based on the data collected from 40 trawlers from January to June 2021 in the four fishing harbours in Ernakulam Thoppumpady, Kalamukku, Murikkumpadam and Munambam. Using a questionnaire, information was collected from fishermen, boat owners, net makers and other stakeholders.

"It is observed that there has been a drastic increase in the size of the gear with a commensurate increase in the size of the fishing vessel and horsepower of the engine. An attempt has been made to document major shifts in length overall (LOA), installed engine horsepower of the trawlers, head rope length and wing mesh size from 1955 to 2021," states the

study by Kufos researcher Lalima Inwati and the team including senior scientists from CIFT.

Common species captured through the fish trawl along the Cochin coast are ribbonfish, threadfin, mackerel, anchovy, pomfret, flatfish, kingfish and oil sardine.

With the increasing pressure of fishing in coastal waters, fishermen working in the mechanized trawl fishing sector have been forced to venture into deeper waters for identification of new fishing grounds and better catch.

Kerala: Women fish vendors from Anchuthengu capital form venture for doorstep delivery

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/women-fish-vendors-from-anchuthengu-in-kerala-capital-form-venture-for-doorstep-delivery/article65065451.ece

"If not for the pandemic, Joys Alex would likely have continued to frequent the Kaduvapally market near Kallambalam to sell fish. Today though, Joys and five other women have launched a venture for marketing fresh fish on WhatsApp. Named Fresh Fish, it promises quality fish from women of Anchuthengu as part of a Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Livelihood initiative. Others in the group are Shirley Paulose, Ajitha S., Jesly J, Liya V., and Lissy M. Buffeted by a cyclone and floods a couple of years ago, women fish vendors were hit even harder by the COVID-19 lockdowns that led to the closure of many fish landing centres. When the catch did become available and some of the women such as Joys managed to purchase fish, they found no demand in markets, streets, or even in door-to-door sales. The menfolk who were out of work in the wake of the pandemic began foraying into fish vending, selling fish at low prices. Many from outside the fishing community too saw this as an opportunity to roll out online ventures, promising fish at one's doorstep. Says Joys who has been selling fish for nearly four decades: "Only one in 10 persons bought fish. We were not earning even half of what we needed to pay the bills, for children's education and medicines, not to mention other expenses such as weddings.

Then the men started taking over the sale of fish." The SEWA Union, of which Joys and many other fish vendors are members, mooted the idea of the women starting an enterprise themselves as an alternative to their traditional method of selling fish. It took some time, but one group, headed by Joys, finally came around to the idea, and decided to take the plunge at a meeting at Mambally. A couple of young housewives who too were SEWA members were roped in to make receiving orders and payments easier for the seniors. Online training SEWA then stepped in to provide the women a series of training in online marketing, how to purchase and sell fish, financial aspects and so on. It made the initial investment, supplying equipment needed to run the venture and a two-wheeler for making deliveries on the condition that the

loan would be repaid in interest-free instalments that would in turn be used to help other groups. Fresh Fish was launched on Wednesday. The number of orders received on WhatsApp has been going up as word goes round. Orders are received from 6.30 a.m. to 10 a.m., and deliveries are made to Attingal, Chirayinkeezhu, and Varkala areas, says Joys. Sonia George, secretary of the SEWA Union, says talks are on to expand the initiative to other women's groups, particularly from the coastal areas of the city such as Poonthura and Valiathura, that have evinced interest in online avenues of marketing fish. Fresh Fish service can be availed of in the WhatsApp numbers 8921658297 & 9497342327

Kerala: Sea safety squad to be formed

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/sea-safety-squad-to-be-formed/article65059522.ece/amp/

"The Fisheries Department has decided to constitute sea safety squads with the support of experienced fishermen to improve coastal surveillance measures. Physically-fit applicants who own fishing boats with the required safety standards can apply for being part of the new squad. Only candidates between the ages of 20 and 40 will be considered for the project. For details, contact 04952-383780.

Kerala: Opposes relocation of MPEDA's Headquarters from Kochi

https://krishijagran.com/animal-husbandry/kerala-opposes-relocation-of-mpeda-s-headquarters-from-kochi/

"Protests are brewing in Kerala over the reported relocation of the Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) headquarters from Kochi. In a letter to Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Kerala legislators Hibi Eden and TN Prathapan stated that ""any move to relocate MPEDA headquarters is detrimental to Kerala's fisheries sector."" They stated that the presence of the MPEDA headquarters in Kochi was critical in the development of the state's fishery exports, which totaled 5,000 crore. Furthermore, there are more registered manufacturing exporters, merchant exporters, and ornamental fish exporters in this state than in any other state in the country. According to the MPs, fishing is a prominent sector in Kerala, with several export-oriented enterprises contributing 3% to the state's economy. Shift to Andhra Pradesh Rumors abound in the state about the MPEDA's headquarters being relocated to Andhra Pradesh, which supplies a significant portion of India's seafood export basket.

According to high-ranking seafood industry sources, a similar move was made a few years ago as a result of lobbying by exporters and the Andhra Pradesh government, which considers their state to be the single largest provider of India's shrimp exports, particularly the Vannamei types. Rather than moving, Andhra Pradesh, according to the sources, requires additional

export-related services, quality control, and disease diagnosis labs. Physical infrastructure has no bearing on export promotion, especially when considering the costs of relocating an administrative organization. The need of the hour is to build a disease research programme to generate fast-growing, disease-resistant shrimps that will allow Andhra Pradesh to become the world's No. 1 shrimp producer and exporter, according to the sources. According to industry sources, Kerala has a higher number of seafood processing units, as well as government organizations such as CMFRI, CIFT, CIFNET, and FSSAI. The decision to relocate the MPEDA headquarters will have an impact on all of their operations. Gujarat is the biggest seafood exporter now, followed by Andhra Pradesh. If Gujarat overtakes Andhra Pradesh, a similar demand for a headquarters could be made, according to the source.

Kerala: Fishers worried due to new fuel cess; Demand special kerosene quota

https://krishijagran.com/animal-husbandry/fishers-worried-due-to-new-fuel-cess-demand-special-kerosene-quota/

"Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed an Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess of Rs.2.5?per liter?on petrol and Rs.4 per liter on diesel in the Union Budget delivered on Tuesday. In February, the price of kerosene doubled, raising the fuel price by about Rs.8 per liter. In February, the price of kerosene doubled, raising the fuel price by about Rs.8 per liter. Food and Civil Supplies Minister G.R. Anil, on the other hand, has stated that the state will continue to sell PDS (public distribution system) kerosene at the January price. Fishermen welcomed the State Government's decision. ""The Kerala government has made a statement by deciding not to raise the price of PDS kerosene. However, the rise in petrol and diesel prices due to the cess is a significant blow to the fishing industry,"" said Charles George of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, a traditional sector fishermen' union. According to Jackson Pollayil of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, the fuel increase in price will have an impact on the fishing community in the midst of a lean season and poor landings.

According to Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of the Kerala Mechanized Boat Owners' Association, with the heating of the ocean waters, fish shoals are moving to deeper seas, which means trawling boats need to spend more time and fuel to catch fish. With petrol and diesel prices above $100 per liter, fishing operations are becoming unprofitable. According to him, the new hike will break the industry's back. George believes Kerala should put pressure on the Centre to offer a special kerosene quota for the fishing industry. In addition, the Centre must offer kerosene subsidies to the fishing industry. The quantity of subsidized kerosene for the fishing industry has declined over the years. The fishing industry requires around 20,000 kl every month, but only obtains approximately 12,000 kl every three months. During 2001-05 the supply was 28,000 kl. According to George, it plummeted to 18,500 kl in 2010. Boats with

engines with a maximum power of 9.9 hp are eligible for 129 liters of subsidized kerosene per month in the traditional sector. However, hardly one-tenth of the supplies are being received, according to George. Fish Drought Most conventional boats with in-board engines are anchored now that the lean season has arrived, he added. Their dissatisfaction originates from the condition resembling?fish-drought. Oil sardine landings have declined from 3.99 lakh tonnes in 2012 to 13,500 tonnes in 2021, making it the most popular fish among both fish eaters and fishermen. Kerala has the most fishing vessels among maritime states, with an estimated 37,000, of which around 20,000 may get fuel subsidies, according to George.

Kerala: How these Kerala fishermen are proving that using square mesh cod ends helps in sustainable fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/how-these-kerala-fishermen-are-proving-that-using-square-mesh-cod-ends-helps-in-sustainable-fishing/article38383658.ece

"A boat operator from Vypeen in Kochi leads the charge in popularising the method that has proven to be effective in reducing juvenile fish catch. At a time when concerns grow deeper and discussions louder on how to find a way out of the corner the fisheries sector has painted itself into, a lone fishing boat operator from Vypeen has shown courage to take the plunge into what initially appeared to be a sea of uncertainty. N. S. Suresh is now coaxing more trawlers to shift to square mesh cod ends in place of the traditional diamond mesh ones. A cod end is the tapering end of the trawl net where fish is aggregated as the net is dragged through the waters and hauled in. The square mesh cod ends, with which experiments began in Kerala in the mid-1990s under the ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), allow juveniles to escape in larger numbers when the net is hauled through the waters and pulled in as the shape of the mesh does not change or constrict itself. However, diamond meshes shrink considerably during trawling and prevent juveniles from escaping, says a CIFT scientist, explaining the advantages of the square mesh variety. Though the experiments had started in Kerala, Gujarat was the first State to make square mesh cod ends legal in 2003.

It was in August last year that a group of scientists approached Mr. Suresh with a suggestion to try out the new cod end. “It was a difficult choice”, says Mr. Suresh who recalls how his workers initially resisted the idea for fear of drop in catch. But Mr. Suresh put up a brave front and persuaded them to stick to the new type. It was the shrimp season and apprehensions were palpable. As it turned out, the first venture was a total failure. However, it was not the failure of the new cod end as other boats too were seen returning virtually empty-handed. The experience shook the confidence of the workers, but they still agreed to go ahead with the new gear. They went out on the second trip and came back with a rich haul. They were in for a surprise when they compared the size of the shrimps in their boat with others. The shrimps

caught in square mesh cod ends were relatively bigger and fetched a marginally higher price than those from other boats. The experience has since cemented Mr. Suresh's confidence. Better fuel economy He points out that deploying square mesh cod ends also results in less drag on the boats, which in turn brought about a saving of 1.5 to 2 litres of diesel per fishing hour. "We are able to cover more waters using less fuel," he says. The square mesh cod end assessment was made possible with the support of In Transition to Marine Stewardship Council, London, executed by WWF India. The new code ends is an answer, at least in part, to the problem of juvenile catch. While the bulk of the juveniles are trapped accidentally, there are instances of fishers making exclusive attempts to catch juveniles forced both by a fish drought and the roaring demand for juveniles from fishmeal factories. Catching juveniles results in insufficient stocks being left to survive to grow and spawn, a big threat to long-term sustainability. The situation prompted scientists at ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute to come up with minimum legal size (MLS) for commercially important species to be caught and retained. Sunil Mohammed, who recently retired from CMFRI, says the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act was amended to make catching fishes below their legal size illegal. But MLS cannot solve the problem as it may only help punish the offenders, while measures such as adoption of square mesh cod ends can be a major step towards conservation.

Kerala: New fuel cess leaves fishers worried

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/special-kerosene-quota-sought-for-fishing-sector/article38371164.ece

"It is almost a double whammy for the fishing sector. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Union Budget presented on Tuesday, announced an Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess of Rs.2.5 per litre on petrol and Rs.4 per litre on diesel. Kerosene price saw a double surge in February with which the fuel price went up by about Rs.8 per litre. However, Food and Civil Supplies Minister G.R. Anil has said the State will continue to sell PDS (public distribution system) kerosene at the January price. Fishers welcomed the State government decision. "Kerala government has made a statement with the decision not to hike PDS kerosene price. However, the rise in petrol and diesel price through the cess is a big blow to the fishing sector," said Charles George of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, a union of fishers in the traditional sector. Jackson Pollayil of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation said the fuel price hike would affect the fishing community in the midst of a lean season and poor landings. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of the Kerala Mechanised Boat Owners' Association said with the heating of the ocean waters, fish shoals are moving to deeper seas, which means trawling boats need to spend more time and fuel to catch fish.

With petrol and diesel price ruling over Rs.100 a litre, fishing operations are becoming unviable. The fresh hike will break the back of the industry, he said. Mr. George said Kerala

should pressure the Centre to provide a special quota of kerosene for the fishing sector. The Centre must also provide kerosene subsidy for the fishing sector. Over the years, the quantity of subsidised kerosene for the fishing sector has dipped. The requirement of the fishing sector is around 20,000 kl per month, But it receives around 12,000 kl every three months. The supply used to be 28,000 kl during the 2001-05 period. It fell to 18,500 kl in 2010, claimed Mr. George. In the traditional sector, boats deploying engines with power up to 9.9 hp are eligible for 129 litres of subsidised kerosene per month. But not even a tenth of supplies are being received, Mr. George added. Fish drought With the lean season in, most traditional boats with in-board engines are anchored, he said. Their frustration stems from the fish-drought-like situation. The most popular fish both among fish-eaters and the fishing community, oil sardine landings have fallen from 3.99 lakh tonnes in 2012 to 13,500 tonnes in 2021. Among maritime States, Kerala has the largest number of fishing vessels at an estimated 37,000, of which around 20,000 may be getting fuel subsidy, Mr. George added.

Kerala: Woman's award-winning fish farm helps her earn Rs 5 Lakh/Year

https://www.thebetterindia.com/273566/kerala-farmer-earns-lakhs-with-cage-fishing/

"Around 40 metres from the banks of Periyar River, near Moothakunnam in Ernakulam, you can see numerous cages in which many varieties of fishes are grown. Tending to and guarding them is 38-year-old Smija M B, who regularly feeds and harvests the fish. In 2018, the Department of Fishers came up with its cage fishing project, as part of the Blue Revolution. With global fish production on the decline due to climate change, the project aims to encourage more farmers to enter the field, especially women and members of scheduled castes/tribes. Around 500 cages were supplied to Kerala as part of this. The project began in Kannur, and later reached Ernakulam, where Smija, who also works as a workshop instructor at SNM INT Engineering College, decided to take up the cause. Cage fishing, or cage culture, involves growing fishes in existing water resources like rivers, ponds, lakes or sea. This allows the fish to remain in free flowing water, while being enclosed in a net cage made of a floating frame, net materials and mooring system. Cage farms are positioned in such a way so as to utilise natural currents, which provide the fish with oxygen and other appropriate natural conditions. 'Women-friendly cage fishing'I grew up in a family of fishing labourers, which helped me develop a genuine interest in the field. My husband, too, adores aquaculture and fish breeding. Earlier, we used to do this on a small scale.

We took up cage fishing mainly because neither of us had a permanent job," Smija tells The Better India. Many women from Smija's locality became part of the project with technical guidance from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), she says. In order to farm in the river area, a no objection certificate has to be acquired from the panchayat, by which the farmer gets hold of a fisheries licence. It has to be refurbished every year by paying

an amount based on the area used. Apart from the subsidy provided by the CMFRI, Smija, her husband Unnikrishnan, and three other shareholders, invested around Rs 10 lakh in this farm. They started off by installing three cages with four types of fishes — sea bass, bluefin trevally, green chromide and mangrove red snapper. “The 2018 floods adversely affected us, but luckily not many fishes were lost. The market became dull and the price of fish went down. We pitched in whatever profit we had gained and expanded farming. Four more cages were installed and we made a small house near the farm area to keep a watch on them 24/7,” Smija explains. In addition to the back-to-back floods, COVID-19 has also posed a challenge to the farmer, mainly due to lack of access to adequate feed. “As both of us are working, farming is now a side business. Despite that, we are able to earn double our annual investment. For instance, last year, we invested around Rs 2 lakh and were able to earn Rs 4-5 lakh,” Smija explains.

“If enough feed is available and thorough care is given, this can be a more successful and income-generating business idea capable of meeting the requirements of a whole family.” she adds. The harvesting period of each fish is different, Smija notes, ranging from six months to two years. She sells them wholesale to nearby markets and retail to individuals. During holidays, the couple gives special offers publicised through social media and banners, which make faster sales, they say. Smija was honoured by CMFRI on Women’s Day 2021. This national level award made her popular among aquaculture farmers in and out of the state, she says. She adds that many women in her neighbourhood have taken up cage fishing after seeing her success. “At least 10 local women organisations approached us for details. Also, research students of aquaculture visit the farm to take notes of the methods I implement here. Before the pandemic, at least 20 used to drop by every month,” says the farmer. “I also help women get in touch with required authorities to start cage fishing.”

Kerala: Italy dismisses probe against marines in case of killing two fishermen in Kerala for lack of evidence

https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=742305&u=italy-dismisses-probe-against-marines-in-case-of-killing-two-fishermen-in-kerala-for-lack-of-evidence

"A judge in Rome dismissed the probe against two Italian marines in shooting two fishermen to death off the coast of Kerala. The action is after the prosecutors informed that there was not enough evidence for the trial. The Supreme Court of India had closed the proceedings related to the case seven months ago. The incident happened in February 2012. On February 15 in 2012, two Kerala fishermen were shot dead by the Italian marines Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone aboard the oil tanker Enrica Lexi while returning after fishing near Lakshadweep aboard the fishing vessel St Anthony. The incident took place 20 nautical miles off the coast of Kerala. Shortly after the incident, the Indian Coast Guard detained Enrica Lexi and the two Italian marines. Latorre and Giron returned to Italy from India

on September 13, 2014 and May 28, 2016, following the case. Italian Defence Minister Lorenzo Guerini welcomed dismissal of the case. In June 2021, the Supreme Court of India quashed the FIR registered in the case and granted bail to the two. The Supreme Court ruled that the arbitral tribunal constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), should pay compensation to the families of the slain fishermen. In addition to the Rs 2.17 crore paid, Italy had paid Rs 10 crore as compensation. Italy has informed the tribunal that a re-investigation in the case will be started.

Kerala: Marine scientists call for pan India ban on trash fish catch

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/marine-scientists-call-for-pan-india-ban-on-trash-fish-catch/article38355853.ece

"Marine scientists have called for a pan India ban on catching trash fish, including juveniles, to conserve the marine environment as well ensuring sustainability of commercially important marine species. A senior marine conservationist said trash fish or bycatch used to be dumped back into the sea in the past because they were considered unfit for human consumption. However, there is considerable increase in the volume of bycatch because of the growing demand for fishmeal in the country to sustain mostly shrimp aquaculture. Trash fish and juveniles are sold to fishmeal factories that operate mostly in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Some have even sprung up in Kerala recently, said senior marine scientist Sunil Mohammed. He added that fishers were now known to be making exclusive attempts to net trash fish on their normal fishing trips. He said trash fish fetched between ?25 and ?30 a kg. Dr. Mohammed said most of the trash fish was caught close to the shore though there had been a general policy not to allow trawling within the 12 nautical-mile offshore area.

Exclusive expeditions for trash fish are not viable, said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of Mechanised Boat Owners Association. He added that fishers were keen to catch trash because it is highly remunerative. Fishmeal factories pay them upfront, and with diesel cost and other expenses spiralling, fishers find some solace in the bycatch. Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, an independent union of fishers, said trash fish catch was an issue that dogged the fishing sector. “We are killing the goose that is laying golden eggs,” he said about catching juveniles. He said trash fish catch appeared to be growing because commercially important fish catch had dropped steeply. The problem is more severe during the summer months between December and June. There is a perceived rise in trash fish catch off the coast of Kerala because the State had amended the Marine Fisheries Regulation Act to implement the provision for minimum legal size for 58 species of commercially important species. The law stipulates that only fish that have achieved a minimum body size can be caught and sold. Violation results in fines as well as seizure of fishing boat and gear. Conservationists said trash fish did not fall strictly within the purview of juvenile fish and catching it is legal. With

juvenile catch off the coast of Kerala being penalised, there is a push to catch trash fish. However, trash fish forms an important part of the marine flora, and unbridled catch can upset the marine food chain and food web and can in turn affect commercially important species. Scientists have called for at least a pan South Indian States cooperation on the issue of both juvenile fishing and trash fish catch because fishing operations are not curtailed by State borders. Pan India legislation is the ideal that should be achieved for effective conservation of marine resources.

Kerala: Kambavala fish workers in distress

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kambavala-fish-workers-in-distress/article38350895.ece

"For Nazir's family, fishing using 'Kambavala' (gill nets) is a traditional method handed down over generations. The uniqueness of their method is that unlike many other fish workers, Nazir and his kin do not venture out into the deep sea. A group of 30 to 40 fish workers, who work with a 'Kambavala', lays out the long net stretching hundreds of meters in the waters close to the shore, waiting patiently for a considerable catch. However, in recent years, the catch has been disappointing due to various reasons, including overfishing in the deeper waters. Their problems gets further compounded by a shrinking of the coastline. 'Best returns'It is during these three or four months of relatively calm waters that we get the best returns. But now, there are several days on which we hardly get anything. Today, after many days, we got squid worth ?10,000, but when it is divided among 30 people, it is nothing. Earlier, we used to get fish worth more than ?1 or 2 lakh on the good days. Many of those who are working with the 'Kambavala' are elderly fish workers who do not venture out much into the sea. I own two such nets, each of which costs a few lakhs to make. When the catch dwindles, we struggle to pay the loans and give wages to the other workers," says Nazir. Along the capital's coastline, there are around 80 such nets registered with the Trivandrum Kambavala Matsyathozhilali Federation, each of its employing 30 to 40 fish workers.

Many of them have been struggling for the past few years with constant sea erosion washing away the shore at Shanghumukhom, Poonthura, and other areas. To prepare the 'Kambavala' for fishing as well as to dry it later, they need larger sandy expanses, which have disappeared in many of these places. According to these fishermen, the work on breakwaters in other areas might have contributed to the shrinking coast in Shanghumukhom and nearby regions. "Fishing in the deeper waters at night time using LED lights also has contributed to this situation. We have been raising the various issues faced by us with the government for quite some time, but there has been no response. When the Vizhinjam rehabilitation package was awarded, we were also promised of aid, although of lesser amounts compared to those who used to fish in the project area. But although our work has been affected due to the shrinking coastline caused by

the breakwater constructions, we have not yet been given any compensation," says Davidson of Poonthura. Tony Oliver, president of the Trivandrum Kambavala Matsyathozhilali Federation, said the government should take steps to either aid the 'Kambavala' fishermen by protecting the coastline or provide them adequate compensation and rehabilitate them.

Kerala: MIMI fish app to be available in 5 more districts from February

https://krishijagran.com/animal-husbandry/mimi-fish-app-to-be-available-in-5-more-kerala-districts-from-february/

"The Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) is extending the MIMI app service, which home-delivers fish cleaned for curries in a hygienic manner, to the districts of Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Palakkad from the first week of February. The action comes five months after the KSCADC launched a service that allows buyers to view product characteristics such as the date, time, and location of the fish capture. Since September of last year, the MIMI Fish app and MIMI Fish Stores have been operating in the districts of Kollam, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha. Hygienic Requirements: KSCADC and ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology have jointly floated MIMI Fish, which is part of the Kerala government's Parivarthanam programme. It prioritizes the health of its consumers by processing, conserving, and storing items in accordance with hygienic standards and regulations established by the European Union and other advanced countries. The unique retail company sells exquisite fish in half-kg packs that are free of adulterants.

The fish, which is caught by traditional fishermen or collected from reliable farms, is chilled as soon as it is caught. This is accomplished using CIFT's technology, which meets European export standards. The Parivarthanam project aims to promote green energy and technologies while also assisting in the preservation of traditional fishery activities. The project includes solar rooftop power, as well as engine electrification and conversions to CNG mode. The word 'MIMI' comes from 'Meemi,' which is how tiny children pronounce 'Meen,' which is Malayalam for fish. According to them, fish marketed under the MIMI brand will be devoid of adulterating elements and processed, preserved, and stored in accordance with advanced country hygiene requirements. Besides consumers & fishermen, this project will benefit engineering and degree dropouts, who will be offered part-time work delivering MIMI items to their homes and eventually receive coaching to help them become graduates.

Kerala: Time for safety check of fishing boats

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jan/19/time-forsafety-check-of-fishing-boats-2408419.html

"In January 3, two fishing boats --- Lady Miracle and Felix --- docked near Malinakara Bridge, Munambam, were destroyed in a major fire. Last year, a fishing boat docked in

Kunjithai river in North Paravoor was also gutted. Fishing boats suffering damage in fire has been a long-standing issue along the coast of Kochi. According to Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act, the boat owners must equip the vessels with navigational, lifesaving, and fire equipment and then only the Fisheries Department will provide them with a licence. However, many of the boats have only portable fire extinguishers. Other items including power or hand-operated pump and fireman's axe, are hardly found and many boat owners are not even aware of the need for such equipment. Only 54 boats have affixed the hologram high-security registration board with GPS/GRPS networking, which can locate and identify deep-sea fishing boats. The fisheries sector has been reeling under severe economic crisis since the Covid situation worsened. Many have lost their jobs.

Even the frequent formation of depression in the sea due to climatic changes is putting many workers in jeopardy. Moreover, the hike in fuel price and the non-availability of fish have also dampened the sector. To make a boat fully equipped, the owners have to invest more. Now, the owners are not bothered about investing in safety appliances," said Aneesh P, assistant director of fisheries station in Vypeen. Apart from the fire-related accidents, the fishing boats also face engine failures and entanglement of fishing nets in the propeller. Migrant labourers Over the last few years, many migrant labourers have been working in fishing boats. The inconsistency in job opportunities and income has driven away many traditional fisherfolk to other professional fields.The migrant labourers from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu do not have in-depth knowledge about the technical functioning of the boats. The ignorance of boat workers about sea traffic laws and failure to comply with the rules also have led to many accidents. The KMFR Act, which was amended in 2017, has made the appointment of a certified shipper or Syrangs mandatory.Syrangs can navigate boats and are fully aware of their functioning. However, these migrant workers aren't trained well and they don't even know how to use a fire extinguisher properly. While renewing the licence, all the mandated items would be present. Since we are not continuously monitoring, we are not sure if they are maintaining the same standard afterwards," says Aneesh.

In case of technical failures or any other emergencies, lights of various colours are used to pass information during night. "Without knowing their use, the workers turn on all the lights. Only a very few boats use them properly," said another official. According to Satheesh Chandra, a boat owner in Munambam, the migrant labourers learn the basics by themselves and have not received any professional training. "To date, the Fisheries Department has not conducted any awareness classes or training sessions," he says. Insurance A fishing boat costs up to Rs 1.5 crore and most of them are not insured. "Insuring a boat hasn't been mandated yet. However, the labourers are getting insurance through the state government's welfare fund," says Aneesh. The boat owners refuse to take insurance as they would have to pay huge premiums. "For the high-cost boats, around Rs 4 lakh has to be paid as premium in a year. We don't earn enough to spend such a sum. If a group insurance scheme is available for an area, that would be much

helpful,"says K B Kassim, Munambam boat owners association coordination committee general convenor.

Most yards unlicenced Ernakulam district has 43 boat building yards in total. Munambam (25), Eda Kochi-Mattancherry (10), Njarakkal-Vypeen (8). "Of the total, the department has received 27 applications and of these only 15 yards have been registered. The rest of the yards are functioning without a licence," says Aneesh P, assistant director of fisheries station in Vypeen. The lack of safety in boat building yards is no different. There have been instances of fire breakouts in yards as well and it is a common affair in Munambam. "The unlicensed yards construct boats just by pulling a tarpaulin. Such makeshift setups have caused fire breakouts," says Kaasim. Staff shortage According to an official, the fisheries department is facing an acute shortage of staff. Safety can be assured if there's enough manpower. In that case, the sea workers and functionalities of the boats can be monitored properly. Need for a fire station The fishing harbours in the city lack fire stations. The existing ones are located in Paravur, Kodungallur, Ernakulam, and Kalamassery. "Many harbours don't have easy access to fire stations. During the Munambam mishap, fire engines had to come all the way from Paravur. If a fire station cannot be set up, then at least a motoring pump should be installed at the jetties so that locals can put out the fire," says Kaasim.

Kerala: Focus on vulnerability mapping and bio-shields for coastal protection

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/focus-on-vulnerability-mapping-and-bio-shields-for-coastal-protection/article38283093.ece

"A study of the coastal protection requirements of vulnerable segments like Chellanam by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) has said that an issue-based management plan must be developed rather than a resource-based plan. The study on coastal protection and social perspectives also emphasised protection of morphology while adopting coastal protection measures. Among the suggestions that evolved during a meeting of stakeholders on social and environmental issues was the need for mapping of land use, land form, assets and people's requirements. The suggestions will be submitted to the government. Conservation and vulnerability mapping must be carried out to develop a comprehensive coastal protection strategy in view of the conditions caused by the effects of climate change even as monitoring of the existing system should be done to suggest sustainable development protocols.

The study also said a coast-specific management approach was needed in most of the segments while seawall alternative could be developed in the Chellanam area using mangrove planting. Developing a bio-shield of a 30-metre-wide mangrove line along the coast could help Chellanam. Stakeholder and community participation at the base level should be ensured for the sustainability of such measures, the study said. Chellanam is among the most vulnerable

coastal segments in the State and the government has announced a series of measures to protect the coast. Chellanam's sea erosion problems, though in the news for long, came into prominence after Cyclone Ockhi hit the coast in December 2017. Periodic sea water incursion and flooding of homes have made lives of the coastal population difficult, prompting the government to announce rehabilitation programmes such as 'Punargeham'. Meanwhile, KUFOS is expected to submit its final report for turning Chellanam into a model fishing village soon after a final round of studies. The government had announced a ?344-crore programme to strengthen seawalls, erect geotextile tube barriers and build breakwaters to protect the coast.

Kerala: To renew permits for supply of subsidised kerosene

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/fishers-hail-decision-to-put-off-inspection/article38280568.ece

"Fishers have welcomed the decision of the Fisheries department to put off the one-day combined inspection of boats to renew permits for supply of subsidised kerosene. The inspection has been postponed in view of the surge in COVID-19 cases, and a new date will be announced soon. A communication from the department said the test positivity rate (TPR) in many districts remained high, and under these circumstances, the inspection of fishing boats for their fitness and renewal of kerosene permits was being put off. Matysa Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, an independent union of fishers, said there was considerable relief among fishers about the boat inspection procedures after it was announced that only boats with engines up to 10 years old would be renewed permits. Charles George of the Vedhi said on Sunday that the fishers were worried about thousands of outboard engine vessels going out of business after the inspection.

The boats with engines, which are more than 10 years old would not get subsidised kerosene under the public distribution system (PDS) or through the apex fisheries cooperative Matsyafed. Mr. George said the Vedhi had requested the government on several occasions to fix the permit period as 15 years to enable thousands of vessels to remain in business, but the plea had not been addressed. He said the present conditions would give the government enough time to consider the plight of boat owners and fish workers. He said hundreds of boats had gone out of business because of the scarcity of fish catch and the rising cost of operations. The government, through the PDS and Matsyafed, provided a limited quantity of kerosene to fishing boats at subsidised rates as an incentive. However, the increasing cost of fuel and labour had put many boats out of business, he added.

Kerala: Change in Marine ecosystem, rise in pufferfish population leave fisherfolk in crisis

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/change-in-marine-ecosystem-rise-in-

pufferfish-population-leave-fisherfolk-in-crisis-puffer-fish-1.6359325

"Changing marine ecosystem is affecting the livelihood of fisherfolk in the state. The plight of the fisherfolk at Vallikkunnu, Parappanangadi, Tanur and Ponnani in Malappuram reveals the gravity of the crisis they are in. The increasing population of pufferfish that shreds fishing nets has been causing huge losses to the community. According to fisherfolk, compared to previous years, the pufferfish population has increased rapidly at an alarming rate. The pufferfish with large external spines, powerful jaws, sharp teeth and self-inflating capacity have been destroying fishing net worth Rs 20 lakh. Using their spines and teeth they will damage the net. If they come as a large group, they not only damage the net but also eat up the catch in it. More often fishermen alert each other if they spot puffer fish in some areas of the sea so that they can avoid the route.

It is the best way to avoid losses as it is difficult to repair the nets damaged by the fish. Similarly, if pufferfish is entrapped in the fishing net then it is better to throw them off to the sea. Because contact with this kind of fish could cause wounds or allergies on the human body. Meanwhile, pufferfish is mostly seen during the months of January and February. There are different types of pufferfish. Most of them contain a toxic substance that is deadly to some other fish and humans. Hence, this kind of fish is not consumed by people. But some people use this fish for treatments in Japan. The decline in the population predators of pufferfish has aggravated the issue.

Kerala: Moratorium on fishermen's loans extended till June

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/jan/13/moratorium-on-fishermens-loans-extended-till-june-2406150.html

"The state government has extended the moratorium on loans taken by fishermen for six more months from January 1 to June 30, 2022. The moratorium on repayment and seizure on loans taken by fishermen for different purposes including purchase of fishing and related equipment, house construction, children's education, medical treatment and marriage of girl children, till December 2008 was extended. As per the cabinet decisions, moratorium will be applicable to ongoing or recently initiated bank seizures too. Other cabinet decisions Governor Arif Mohammed Khan will receive the salute at the Republic Day parade in the state capital. Education Minister V Sivankutty will also attend the R Day function. Other ministers to attend in districts are J Chinchurani (Kollam), Antony Raju (Pathanamthitta), P Prasad (Alappuzha), V N Vasavan (Kottayam), Roshy Augustine (Idukki), P Rajeeve (Ernakulam), K Radhakrishnan

(Thrissur) and K Krishnankutty (Palakkad).

Kerala: To facilitate deep-sea fishing as near-shore resources deplete

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-to-facilitate-deep-sea-fishing-as-near-shore-resources-deplete/article38219478.ece

"The government has indicated its intentions to permit and encourage deep-sea fishing as well as train fishers while bringing about structured control over near-sea fishing activities to attain sustainability. Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian said at a workshop here organised by the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) that the government would provide permission and training to selected fishers in deep-sea fishing. He said fishing in near waters (within 12 nautical miles) did not yield enough fish for meeting the requirements of the State even as aquaculture needed adoption of new technology to meet the shortage of wild catch. The decision to encourage deep-sea fishing comes in the wake of Kerala, where annual fish consumption is way above the national average, witnessing a fall in catch over the years. Kerala's fish consumption is nearly 30 kg per head per year while the national average is around six kg and the global average around 22 kg. According to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute figures for 2019 (no reliable figures available for 2020, 2021), India's marine fish production showed a marginal increase but Kerala's landings went down 15% and oil sardine landings (which supports the vast majority of traditional fishers and is a major ingredient in the food supply system) was the lowest in two decades.

India recorded 3.56 million tonnes of fish landings in 2019. Tamil Nadu stood first with 7.75 lakh tonnes, followed by Gujarat (7.49 tonnes). Kerala recorded 5.44 lakh tonnes. For Kerala, the fall in the catch of Indian mackerel, a near-shore resource, is quite disturbing. Indian mackerel landings fell 43%. While poor fish landing is attributed to depletion in resources, there have also been severe change in weather conditions with cyclones hitting the coast resulting in loss of fishing days. Fisheries scientist Sunil Mohammed, now retired from CMFRI, says near-shore fishing involves the question of management while deep-sea fishing requires development and training.

He says oceanic squid is one of the resources that can be tapped to boost the fisheries along with myctophids, which can be deployed for fish meal production in place of commercially important juvenile fish. General secretary of the All Kerala Boat Operators' Association Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal says the Marine Products Export Development Authority should be entrusted with the task of deep-sea fishing issues so that there will be a uniform allocation of fishing vessels across the coastal States. He says there are around 15,000 near-sea fishing vessels and 2,600 deep-sea vessels operating off the Kerala coast. The authority could decide on the optimum fleet size and the fisheries targets. While the Indian fisheries sector is estimated

to be worth around Rs.1,87,000 crore, Kerala earns around Rs.40,000 crore a year.

Kerala: Kerosene permit: Fishers upset over restrictions

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2022/jan/08/kerosene-permit-fishers-upset-over-restrictions-2404353.html

"The traditional fishermen community in the state has expressed concern over the drive launched by the fisheries department for verification of outboard engines used by country craft involved in marine fishing. According to fishermen leaders, the department has announced that only the permits of engines purchased within 10 years will be renewed. This will lead to denial of permit to thousands of fishing craft, said Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi state president Charles George. The joint inspection of fishing crafts will be held on January 16 and the last day for submitting applications was on Friday. The last inspection was held in 2015. Traditional fishermen receive kerosene at subsidised rate from civil supplies department and from Matsyafed. While the subsidy for kerosene purchased from Matsyafed will be credited only six months later, the civil supplies department provides spot subsidy. A fishing craft will get 129 litres of kerosene a month from the department.

“The government should allow us to use fishing boat engine for 15 years. The engine of a country craft costs Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh according to engine power and setting a deadline on its use will add to our burden. The verification is held only once in three years and only boats that are registered during the verification drive are eligible for kerosene permit,” said National Fishworkers Forum treasurer Jackson Pollayil. Denying the allegations, the fisheries minister’s office said restrictions have been imposed to weed out illegal beneficiaries. “Though we provided 15,000 permits in 2015, only 10,000 beneficiaries used it. People who don’t own country craft are illegally claiming permit and selling the subsidised kerosene at a higher rate. Though the 10-year cap has been fixed for providing kerosene subsidy there is no restriction on its use. While the market rate of kerosene is Rs 96 per litre, we are providing a subsidy of Rs 25 per litre. The government is trying to increase the kerosene quota from Centre and has recently got an allocation of 1,435 kilo litres,” said an officer.

Kerala: ‘Local fishers to be trained in deep sea fishing’

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/local-fishers-to-be-trained-in-deep-sea-fishing/articleshow/88744389.cms

"Fisheries minister Saji Cherian has said that the state will soon give permission for deep sea fishing. The selected fishermen will be trained by the state government. Inaugurating a two-day national seminar at the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) on seasonal changes in the field of fisheries and aquaculture practices, Cherian said that aquaculture can be promoted to ensure that Malayalis get their favourite fish food. He criticized

the fisheries department for its inefficiency in bringing about the much-needed development in the sector. Crores of rupees are wasted without any positive results. This has to change and those involved should also change. Former fisheries minister K Babu, MLA, presided over the function. State fisheries director R Girija and Kufos vice-chancellor K Riji John were also present.

Kerala: Fishers urge govt to review decision on permit renewal for fishing vessels

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-urge-kerala-govt-to-review-decision-on-permit-renewal-for-fishing-vessels/article38149944.ece

"Fishers have expressed apprehension over the possibility of thousands of outboard engine vessels going out of business after a proposed Fisheries department inspection of vessel engines on January 16 for issue of fresh permits. According to government criteria, engines up to 10 years old alone will be issued fresh permits. It implies that thousands of vessels that fail the test will be out of the list of those eligible for subsidised kerosene through the Public Distribution System or Matsyafed. Vessels that were granted permits in 2012 and are still in operation will be among those losing permits under the new stipulations, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi on Thursday. The fishing community had requested the government through several representations to fix the permit period for 15 years, but the government has not responded so far, he added. He said union members had met Fisheries Joint Secretary Asha Augustine on Thursday and conveyed their apprehension over the government move.

According to him, as many as 158 vessels were issued permits in Ernakulam in 2015. Since then, over 200 had joined the fleet. Of them, only 148 have so far applied for permit renewal, which indicates that the rest may have already gone out of business, he added. Fishing vessels with outboard engines have been receiving a specific quantity of subsidised kerosene over the last three decades. The government has been slashing the quantum of subsidised kerosene supply to the fisheries sector following a World Trade Organisation recommendation that no fuel subsidy be offered to fishing vessels. A portion of subsidised kerosene distributed through Supplyco has been reserved for fishing vessels.

However, the volume has been drastically reduced. While 600 litres of subsidised kerosene used to be given to an engine or a vessel per month two decades ago, the volume has been cut down to 129 litres. The volume of kerosene is not even enough to meet a day's fuel need, claimed Mr. George. The subsidised quantum has now been further reduced to 40 to 60 litres per month, he added. Meanwhile, fishers said the decision of the Fisheries department not to renew permits for boats owned by those above 60 years old would result in livelihood issues. While boats will go out of business, their owners will be totally banned from engaging in fishing operations, Mr. George said. The fishing community, in a recent memorandum to the

Chief Minister, had requested him to make State agencies intervene to end black marketing of kerosene.

Kerala: Kufos seeks strategies to develop a sustainable fisheries model

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kufos-seeks-strategies-to-develop-a-sustainable-fisheries-model-for-kerala/article38111941.ece

"The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) and the Fisheries department will join hands to develop a sustainable fisheries culture for the State and reorient aquaculture strategies. Fisheries think-tank from across the country comprising scientists, industrialists, and farmers will gather at the university on January 6 and 7 for a national seminar on reorienting strategies towards sustainable aquaculture and fisheries. Vice Chancellor of the university K. Riji John said around 300 scientists, industrialists, farmers and fisheries department officials will participate in the conference. Fisheries Minister and Pro-Chancellor of Kufos Saji Cherian will inaugurate the national conference.

Former Fisheries Minister K. Babu, MLA, will preside at the inaugural. R. Ramkumar, State Planning Board member, will deliver the keynote address. “Kufos is the first fisheries and ocean studies university in the country and has enormous responsibility to play a key role in reorienting Indian aquaculture scenario to meet the new challenges by setting up a better State-level model, which can multiply the income of the farming community in a sustainable way,” said Dr. John.The conference is being organised against this backdrop envisaging to provide an ideal platform for researchers, academicians, farmers, industrialists and policy makers to take forward the concept of sustainability,” he added. While the aquaculture sector is growing fast, there are concerns about the environmental implications of the industry, which pose a question over sustainability. These are also related to diseases, stock loss, climate change and environmental degradation, among others. A sustainable aquaculture strategy needs to ensure farmers earned a fair reward from farming while causing no or minimum damage to the surrounding ecosystem, Dr. John said.

Kerala: KCA goes ahead with plan to reclaim wetlands in Edakochi

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kca-goes-ahead-with-plan-to-reclaim-wetlands-in-edakochi/articleshow/88639085.cms

"In what will slowly pave way for large-scale destruction of mangroves in Vembanad wetlands, the Kerala Cricket Association (KCA) has gone ahead with the proposal to reclaim a large portion of wetlands in Edakochi. The proposal of KCA to develop an international stadium, spreading over 22 acres, has been revived by planning to fill the sediments extracted from the Vembanad lake, which will be desilted very soon. The proposal to reclaim the wetlands was earlier shot down by the ministry of environment and forests headed by Jairam

Ramesh after it was found violating the coastal regulation zone (CRZ)-1 rules. The irrigation department is now planning to dredge and deepen the 1.5-km stretch of the Vembanad Lake in the first phase from Kannangattu Island to Edakochi at a cost of Rs 1.2 crore. The dredging will remove the sediment accumulated in the lake, especially after the 2018 floods. The plan is to dump the sediments extracted from the lake onto the wetland owned by the KCA as the irrigation department could not find any other place to dump it. “There was a submission by K Babu MLA in the assembly demanding deepening of the lake. Fishermen were also complaining that they found it difficult to operate boats on this stretch due to accumulation of sediments and water also floods into the houses nearby.

The issue could be addressed only by removing the sediment and we have got a permission from the KCA to dump the sediment on their land at Edakochi,” a major Irrigation official in Ernakulam said. The KCA officials said they have even approached the chief minister to take up the matter. “The irrigation department approached us requesting to dump the sediment from the lake here. We also received requests from fishermen raising the same. That’s why the apex council of the KCA gave permission as part of social commitment,” KCA secretary Sreejith V Nair. KCA officials said that when they purchased the land in 2005, it was in CRZ-2 and there were no mangroves at the site at that time. “As the project got delayed, mangroves grew there. When the re-categorisation of CRZ norms came, the area fell under CRZ-1 as mangroves grew in an area of 1,000 square feet and no construction was permitted. But we gave a request to the chief minister that KCA needs an international stadium and we will now approach the central government too,” Nair said. “It is suspected that the current move is to reclaim the site. If a large quantity of sediment is deposited, the area will become terrestrial land and the natural habitat of mangroves will deteriorate,” Dr P Sujanapal, a senior scientist in Kerala Forest Research Institute said.

Kerala: Low catch, high diesel price force fishermen to remain on shore

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2022/jan/03/low-catch-high-diesel-price-forcekerala-fishermen-to-remain-on-shore-2402390.html

"High diesel prices, low catch and alleged harassment by fisheries officers are forcing trawler boats to remain moored at fishing harbours in Kerala. According to fishing boat owners, deep sea fishing has become unviable due to the high operating cost and depleting marine resources. This has led to around 60 per cent of fishing boats in the state remaining idle for the past one month. ""The fish in the Kerala coast has migrated to northern regions like Gujarat coast and the Oman sea. The traditional fishing grounds have changed and we have to travel up to the Goa coast to get a good catch. A fishing vessel needs 600 litres of diesel for a single-day operation. A trip to the Goa coast will take at least 10 days and we cannot afford to purchase 6,000 litres of diesel for one expedition. Most boat owners are caught in debt traps and we need

the government’s support to survive,"" said All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal. Meanwhile, a drive launched by the fisheries department to impound fishing boats with no renewed licence has added to the woes of the boat owners.

""The department has impounded five boats over the past week for not renewing the licence and in the name of juvenile fishing. The chief secretary had assured us that action will be taken only if the content of juvenile fish is more than 40 per cent. But the officers are impounding boats even if the content is low,"" said PP Gireesh, chairman of the committee for protection of Munambam-Vypeen fishing zone."Two days ago, a fine of Rs 2.5 lakh was imposed on a boat and its catch worth Rs 8 lakh was auctioned. There is corruption in even the auctioning of fish. The sector is in deep distress,"" he said. Fishing boat owners are urging the government to reduce the tax on diesel to support the sector. ""Tamil Nadu has announced a waiver of Rs 8,000 on 1,000 litres of diesel for fishing boats, while Karnataka has waived the tax by Rs 9,000. The licence fee in the neighbouring states is Rs 1,000, but Kerala collects Rs 26,000. If the government continues the apathy, the fishing sector will migrate to neighbouring states,"" said Joseph Xavier. However, fisheries department officers said the drive was launched after giving enough time for fishing boats to pay the licence fee. ""We admit the sector is in distress. We gave them enough time to pay the fees.

The drive against catching juvenile fish was launched as indiscriminate fishing practices have led to depletion of marine resources. If they want a waiver in the fee, the boat owners have to approach government. We cannot allow fishing boats to operate without licence,"" said Saju MS, Joint Director of Fisheries, Central Zone. Seafood exporters turn to Andhra Pradesh The non-availability of fish in Kerala has forced the seafood exporters to source fish from farms in Andhra Pradesh. ""There is a scarcity of wild-caught fish in Kerala. The landing of shrimp, squid and cuttle fish has declined drastically. We are sourcing fish from aquaculture firms in Andhra. The export market is also struggling to recover from the impact of COVID,"" said Alex K Ninan, Kerala region president, Seafood Exporters Association of India. According to sources, China's hostile approach has also adversely affected the crisis faced by exporters. China, which has been a major market for seafood products from Kerala for decades, has blacklisted 55 state firms alleging COVID contaminations of cartons. A few seafood export firms in Kerala have thus initiated steps to establish processing units in Andhra.

Kerala: Financial aid for family of fishers who die at sea will be given in six months, says Kerala Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/financial-aid-for-family-of-fishers-who-die-at-sea-will-be-given-in-six-months-says-kerala-fisheries-minister-saji-cherian/article38056780.ece

"The Minister inaugurates group accident insurance scheme adalat and compensation disbursal programme organised by the Fisheries department in Thiruvananthapuram. The State government will ensure that financial assistance for the family of fishers who die in accidents at sea is disbursed within six months, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. He was inaugurating a group accident insurance scheme adalat and compensation disbursal programme organised by the Fisheries department in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday.Fisheries officers will be responsible for the timely disbursement of benefits, including financial assistance. Nodal officers will be appointed in the Fisheries department and the Kerala Fishermen Welfare Fund Board (KFWFB) for the purpose," said Mr. Cherian. The Minister said insurance cover would be made mandatory for all fishers venturing into the sea and the complete details of crew members must be reported to the relevant authorities. "This is essential in coordinating rescue operations and the fishers should not be negligent about it," he said. Mr. Cherian also instructed the Fisheries officials to understand the limitations of the fishing community and act accordingly.

"We have noticed a delay in disbursal of benefits and this will not be allowed. If a family did not receive the assistance within six months, the officer concerned will have to give an explanation. This will be followed by an intervention at the ministerial level," he added. Observing that the family of fishers who go missing in the sea are eligible for the aid only after seven years according to Central norms, he said the government would consider providing insurance coverage within six months. "The period of seven years is fixed by the Centre, and very often it causes great inconvenience to the kin. We will reach an agreement with the insurance companies about it." Under the scheme, the government will be providing financial assistance to 52 beneficiaries, which include 50 fishers who lost their lives at sea and two others who were permanently disabled. Fishers belonging to Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Kottayam districts received the aid at the event. The Minister examined the applications of fishers from these districts who are yet to receive the benefits at the adalat. Transport Minister Antony Raju, who presided over the function, said the government resolved several issues faced by the fishing community in the last six months. No one will be allowed to delay the disbursal benefits by raising unnecessary objections, he said. Fisheries secretary Tinku Biswal, director R. Girija and KFWFB chairman C.P. Kunhiraman were among those present.

Kerala: Njarackal aqua fish farm gets water cycle facility

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/njarackal-aqua-fish-farm-gets-water-cycle-facility/articleshow/88552931.cms

"The visitors of aqua fish farm at Njarackal, which is one of the popular tourism spots in the city, can ride a water cycle through the lagoon and enjoy the calm and serene nature. With

the visitors demanding more amenities, K N Unnikrishnan MLA flagged off the facility at the farm on Tuesday. It is first time in the state that a water cycle was introduced in an aqua tourism spot. The capacity of the water cycle, made of fibreglass, is 150kg. Speed boat facilities and pedal boat facilities are also available in the farm. The fish farm, which is a part of Tsunami emergency assistance programme (TEAP), is one of the major eco-tourism centres in Kochi. Located around 14km from the Kochi city, the 45-acre area was converted into three ponds to nurture various varieties of fish. Bamboo huts in the middle of the pond is another highlight of the farm. Vypeen native Antony M Isa, who manufactured the water cycle, and technical adviser of the project Dr Baiju were honoured at the function.

Kerala: Insurance adalat for fish workers on December 28

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/insurance-adalat-for-fish-workers-on-december-28/article38033665.ece

"An adalat on the accident group insurance scheme for fish workers will be held on December 28 to ensure timely distribution of scheme benefits to the deserving, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. The group insurance scheme is being implemented for fish and allied workers by the Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board (KFWFB) with the government's financial support and through public sector insurance companies. Currently, 2,40,867 fish workers and 84,603 allied workers are members of the scheme. Financial aid to the tune of Rs. 10 lakh will be provided for accident deaths and for those who are completely bed-ridden. Adalats are being held for beneficiaries in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, and Kottayam districts, as it was noticed that there was a delay due to various reasons in disbursal of benefits. Transport Minister Antony Raju will preside over the adalat to be held at the PWD Rest House at Thycaud at 11 a.m. on December 28.

Kerala: Four fishermen killed, 27 hurt as van collides with lorry

http://www.uniindia.com/four-fishermen-killed-27-hurt-as-van-collides-with-lorry-in-kerala/south/news/2605282.html

"Four fishermen were killed and 27 others injured, two of them seriously, when the van in which they were travelling collided head-on with a lorry at Chavara in Kollam district of Kerala at 0030 hours on Tuesday. The van, carrying 34 fishermen was heading to Beypore harbour for fishing while while the lorry was on its way to Neendakara fishing harbour to load fish, police said. Out of 34 fishermen, 12 are from Tamil Nadu from where the van left for Beypore harbour in Kozhikode, sources said. The deceased were identified as Biju (35), Justin (56), Berchuman (45)

and Karunabaram (56). Two seriously injured persons were shifted to Thiruvananthapuram Government Medical College hospital and others to Karunagappally Taluk hospital, police added.

Kerala: Fish farmers reap bumper harvest

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fish-farmers-reap-bumper-harvest/articleshow/88481128.cms

"Adding colours to their Christmas celebrations, a group of farmers from the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe communities in the district has a bumper harvest of pearl spot (karimeen) and tilapia through their cage fish farming venture. The farmers reaped good catches from the two cage farming ventures at Nettoor and Ezhikkara. The eight-month-long cage farming was carried out under the schemes — scheduled caste sub plan (SCSP) and tribal sub plan (TSP) — of the central marine fisheries research institute (CMFRI). A self-help group named 'Sreedevi', including 22 ST families in Thandassery Colony at Nettoor, harvested a yield of 600kg of pearl spot and 1,300kg of tilapia from four cages. While pearl spot attained a growth of an average 300g, tilapia got an average weight of 650g.

Under the TSP scheme of CMFRI, the ST families were provided with cages, ancillary facilities, fish seeds and feed. Five SC families benefited from the cage farming carried out at Ezhikkara under the CMFRI's SCSP scheme as they managed to harvest 250kg of tilapia from one cage. A team of researchers from CMFRI led by K Madhu, Rema Madhu and Rajesh N coordinated the cage farming ventures. Under the SCSP scheme of the CMFRI, cage fish farming is being undertaken by members of the SC community across the country, and biofloc farming is aimed at extending the benefits of this scheme to those who do not have access to open waterbodies. The biofloc project is underway in Palakkad, Thrissur, Idukki, Kottayam and Kollam districts under CMFRI's guidance. The tilapia fry were procured from MPEDA's hatchery in Vallarpadam. Biofloc technology is a scientific method for high-density fish farming in a controlled environment in which fish wastes are converted into useful nutrients.

Kerala: Local fishers to resist sale of stock from other States

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/local-fishers-to-resist-sale-of-stock-from-other-states/article37972368.ece

"Local fishermen owing allegiance to various trade unions have warned of obstructing the sale of low-cost fish brought here from various other States with a claim that it had been spoiling the fruit of their labour. Coming down heavily against wholesale agents in the sector, fishermen organisations' leaders said here on Thursday that they would launch an indefinite stir in various harbours if the Fisheries Department failed to take note of the "unfair trade". According to the Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation, the low-cost trade without complying

with any official price fixing mechanism and quality standards, was emerging as a challenge to the local fishermen and allied workers. They alleged that the reduced price was a trickery to sell off poor quality fish in the market and create an unhealthy competition with the local fishers. “By the time we reach the local market with fresh catch, the inter-State wholesale dealers will wind up the day’s trade.

With their increasing presence in the market, the local fishers are struggling to sell off their stock with a fair sales margin,” said a local fisherman from Chaliyam. He also claimed that there was a constant effort to portray local fishers as agents of unfair trading and reduce the demand for their catch. The Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation leaders said the wholesale agents were mostly found securing the cheap stocks from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to take control of the local market and suppress the local suppliers. Some of the influential inter-State agents were also found threatening the local fishermen who questioned the unfair trade. Meanwhile, some of the local fish vendors said there was no fall in the usual demand for local catch considering the quality aspect. Despite the inter-State agents’ active presence in the field with a highly competitive pricing, it was not well-received by the majority, citing suspected adulteration and the use of unhealthy preservatives, they said.

Kerala: 16 fisher families take refuge in crammed Valiyathura godown

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/dec/18/16-fisher-families-take-refuge-in-crammed-valiyathura-godown-2396754.html

"Friday marked 28 days since Anushka R was born. A black thread was tied around the baby’s waist and black bangles were put on her. The 28th-day ceremony was held in the sombre setting inside the godown of Kerala Maritime Board, Valiyathura, where the makeshift relief camp has been opened. Reni A, Anushka’s mother, while rocking the baby, says that life has been a struggle ever since they moved in to the camp. “There is dust all around and this isn’t a space to raise a baby,” says Reni. She lives with her husband and their two daughters in the tiny cubicle set up in the godown. Her mother and family live in another cubicle. Reni gave birth to Anushka in the camp set up at St Roch’s High School, Valiyathura, where she had been residing for nine months after sea waves destroyed their house at Valiyathura. Just a few days after giving birth to the baby, Reni was forced to move out with 15 other families on December 3. “The school authorities and residents of the area arrived one fine evening and asked us all to move out. They knew the classes would begin and could have given us a heads-up. Instead, they drove us out, throwing all our goods out.

We have lost a lot of our belongings,” says Mary. The families live in the dingy cubicles that have been set up in the godown, amid the dust, without electricity. Ask Mary how the families cook. She takes you by out to one of the crammed rooms, which has a gas stove, but no burner. “How can we cook? When they threw out our belongings, we lost a lot of things,” says Mary.

With the bare minimum facilities in the godown, the residents are finding it difficult to live, and some have chosen to stay in the verandah of the building. Eighty-year-old Alice who has suffered a stroke lies on the verandah. Not a moment passes without flies hovering around her. Sixty-year-old Matilda who takes care of her mother says that her mother needn't be shifted to the hospital and all that they want is a proper space to live. "I can take care of my mother. There is no need to shift her to the hospital," she says. Officials from Muttathara village office arrived in the afternoon to check on Alice. "We arrived after hearing that she was unwell. But she is refusing to be shifted to the hospital," says village officer Kumar A. He said electricity will be provided to the facility soon. The 16 families residing in Kochuthoppe were asked to move to the relief camp at the school after their houses got destroyed in sea erosion. "We lived well. We had enough rooms, privacy and a good space to live. It is not our fault that we lost everything to sea erosion.

Ever since the Vizhinjam project began, we have been bearing the brunt. The government has promised us homes and that the foundation stones of our homes will be laid in January. If that doesn't happen, the repercussions would be heavy," says Mary. In the two godown spaces of the building, the 16 families took refuge, along with the families already living at the facility. "The godown spaces were used to store cement, so there is a lot of dust here. And there is no electricity and we are forced to sleep outside," says Jesse. Jesse lives in one of the makeshift cubicles set up in the godown along with her husband, son and daughter-in-law. Jesse's husband Antony suffered a stroke which has affected the movement of his left arm and left leg. Antony who used to go fishing can no longer do that and the whole family survives on Jesse and her son's earnings. "We can't stay here forever. We had our own homes where we lived in peace and dignity. Our lives are now reduced to these dingy rooms. Our request is to give us what is ours," she says.

Kerala: Local fishers to resist sale of stock from other States

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/local-fishers-to-resist-sale-of-stock-from-other-states/article37974134.ece

"Local fishermen owing allegiance to various trade unions have warned of obstructing the sale of low-cost fish brought here from various other States with a claim that it had been spoiling the fruit of their labour. Coming down heavily against wholesale agents in the sector, fishermen organisations' leaders said here on Thursday that they would launch an indefinite stir in various harbours if the Fisheries Department failed to take note of the "unfair trade". According to the Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation, the low-cost trade without complying with any official price fixing mechanism and quality standards, was emerging as a challenge to the local fishermen and allied workers. They alleged that the reduced price was a trickery to sell off poor quality fish in the market and create an unhealthy competition with the local fishers.

Wholesale traders “By the time we reach the local market with fresh catch, the inter-State wholesale dealers will wind up the day’s trade.

With their increasing presence in the market, the local fishers are struggling to sell off their stock with a fair sales margin,” said a local fisherman from Chaliyam. He also claimed that there was a constant effort to portray local fishers as agents of unfair trading and reduce the demand for their catch. The Swathanthra Matsyathozhilali Federation leaders said the wholesale agents were mostly found securing the cheap stocks from Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to take control of the local market and suppress the local suppliers. Some of the influential inter-State agents were also found threatening the local fishermen who questioned the unfair trade. Meanwhile, some of the local fish vendors said there was no fall in the usual demand for local catch considering the quality aspect. Despite the inter-State agents’ active presence in the field with a highly competitive pricing, it was not well-received by the majority, citing suspected adulteration and the use of unhealthy preservatives, they said.

Kerala: Fish farmers in Ernakulam hoping for a revival of fortunes during festival season

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fish-farmers-in-ernakulam-hoping-for-a-revival-of-fortunes-during-festival-season/article37971076.ece

"Fish farmers in the district, who have been at the receiving end of the COVID 19-induced conditions and virtual shutdown in sales over several months, are now looking to a new season of hope with the Christmas-New Year celebrations around the corner and an expected rise in demand for fresh fish. But, farmers were still struggling to overcome the devastating effects of the unprecedented heavy rain since early January and the rapidly increasing price of fish feed, said Seljan Attipetty, a fish farmer in Kumbalanghi. He said he was quite new to the business of fish farming but hoped to make good use of the emerging festival season, by also making use of social media platforms to market the harvest. The Palliakkal Service Cooperative Bank near North Paravur has announced freshly-caught farmed fish sales between December 21 and 24. The cooperative has several groups of farmers under its initiative engaged in fish culture, farming, dairying and poultry and the cooperative expects to harvest around eight tonnes of pearl spot (karimeen), tilapia, trevally (vatta) and sea bass (kalanchi) over the four days. For home delivery, customers may contact 9497289000.

The cooperative had also arranged for home delivery of the freshly-caught fish in areas like North Paravur, Aluva and Edappally, said a spokesman for the cooperative on Thursday. There will also be a food festival during the four days. V.M. Joseph Shibu in Kottappuram said fish farmers in the district were seeing a revival of fortunes after the heavy rain. More than the COVID-19 lockdown, the heavy unseasonal rain had resulted in loss of fingerlings, said Mr. Shibu, who is engaged in cage fish farming and sells around 200 kg of fish per month. Most of the fish farmers are offering pearl spot, sea bass and tilapia, and the majority have switched to

cage farming. They expect the prices to be remunerative considering the demand for live fish in the market. At the same time, Mr. Shibu said there was a tendency among wholesale buyers to push down the price even as direct marketing continued to be a problem. P.G. Antony, who is engaged in cage farming near Kottappuram, said farmers were facing severe feed shortage. The price of feed had gone up from around Rs.22-24 a kg to about Rs.30.

Kerala: 'New norms must protect traditional fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/new-norms-must-protect-traditional-fishers/article37957483.ece

"The Matsya Thozhilali Federation has approached the Central government with various demands, including the abandonment of blue economy projects within 75 nautical miles of the coast. In a memorandum to the government, Federation State president Ummer Ottummal said that up to 75 nautical miles of the shore should be considered the work area of traditional fisherfolk. Mr. Ottummal also demanded that marine fisheries norms should not be applicable to traditional fishermen engaged in the trade with or without the help of machines. He sought more time to respond to the Indian Marine Fisheries Bill as its translations in eight languages were distributed only in recent days. "The presentation of the Bill in Parliament should be postponed as we require more time to study it and respond creatively," he said. According to the Federation, the laws should protect traditional fishermen. "Any change in existing rules or formation of new laws should consider the traditional fishermen who make a hard living by battling the sea every day," said Mr. Ottummal.

Kerala: Boat operators' association to stage protest in Ernakulam

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/boat-operators-association-to-stage-protest-in-ernakulam/articleshow/88251015.cms

"The All Kerala fishing boat operators' association along with their family members will organize a protest march to the office of the fisheries department in Ernakulam on Wednesday. This is in protest against the decision of the district department not to renew boats, which were due for re-registration. "Boats which have been operating in these waters for the last several years were being denied renewal. According to the requirement, 12-year-old wooden boats, 15-years-old iron boats and 18-year-old fibre boats have been renewed by the department after testing its fitness. This is being done in other districts. Here officials are coming up with excuses like they don't have a fitness expert or staff etc. It is a ploy to reduce the number of boats," said general secretary of the association Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal. He said that the ports department, which has three zonal offices, has experts and their services could be availed. The association has submitted a memorandum to the chief minister, fisheries minister and industries minister P Rajeeve. Kalapurackal said that in Beypore, the boats were not being allowed to

operate stating that they don't have codeend nets.

Kerala: 41% of coastline under erosion threat: Study

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/dec/12/41-of-keralas-coastline-under-erosion-threat-study-2394576.html

"Giving enough reasons for the state to worry, a study report tabled in Parliament by the Ministry of Earth Sciences reveals that 41% of the coastline in Kerala is under varying degrees of coastal erosion. The National Centre for Coastal Research has monitored the shoreline changes along 6,632km of Indian coastline from 1990 to 2018. The results of the study are mainly classified into three different categories — erosion, stable and accretion. The overall long-term (1990-2018) shoreline change result shows that about 32% of the coastline is under varying degrees of erosion, while 27% is of accreting nature and the remaining 41% is in a stable state. The state-wise shoreline analysis reveals that 60% of the West Bengal coast was noticed with varying degrees of erosion followed by Puducherry (56%), Kerala (41%) and Tamil Nadu (41%). Accretion was dominant along the Odisha coast with 51% followed by Andhra Pradesh (48%).

This is not the first time the grave situation along the 590km-long coastline — one of the most densely populated in the country and exposed to rogue waves — is being exposed. The 'National assessment of shoreline changes along Indian coast: A status report for 26 years (1990-2016)' prepared by the National Centre for Coastal Research had revealed that around 45% of Kerala's coastline is eroding while 34% is stable and 21% accreting. The report said coasts of Kasaragod, Kannur, Malappuram, Ernakulam and Kollam are dominated by both erosion and stable condition with a few pockets of accretion. Another study, 'Coastal Morphology and Long-term Shoreline Changes along the Southwest Coast of India', conducted by the National Centre for Earth Science Studies and published in Journal Geological Society of India, revealed that almost 60% of the state's coastline is eroding with about 29% showing an accreting trend. A 46-year-period from 1968 to 2014 was studied using multi-dated shoreline images and Survey of India topographic charts.

All these studies point to factors like construction of structures such as fishing harbours, ports, groynes, sea walls and beach sand mining for monazite ores for altering the nature of the coastline and induced changes. M C Dathan, scientific advisor to the chief minister and a former director of ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), said, "Coastal erosion is more vigorous and rampant along the coastline of Kerala as more energy is stored in the waves of the Arabian Sea as compared to the Bay of Bengal. There are a lot of global factors which influence the sea surface temperature and wind patterns over the sea. We have been following various methods like construction of a sea wall, diaphragm wall etc here to dampen the force of

waves. It is to some extent useful but, certainly, more needs to be done."

Kerala: Black clams released in Vembanad Lake to boost incomes of inland fishermen

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/dec/10/black-clams-released-in-keralas-vembanad-lake-to-boost-incomes-of-inland-fishermen-2394062.html

"A project launched by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) to rejuvenate black clam resources in the Vembanad Lake has helped enhance the incomes of inland fishermen. The CMFRI had released baby clams in the Vembanad Lake aiming to increase production. This has helped fishermen harvest around 10 tonnes of clam per day from two locations in the lake. The Molluscan Fisheries Division of CMFRI had released baby clams on the northern side of the Thanneermukkom Barrage in a bid to improve clam production and enhance the livelihoods of fishermen. The fisheries department also joined hands with the project by including it in the district panchayat scheme. Approximately 200 tonnes of baby black clams were released in Keecheri and Chakkathukadu areas of the Vembanad Lake under the technical guidance of CMFRI. According to scientists at CMFRI, the initiative is expected to provide a yield of nearly 1500 tonnes from these sites which is more than seven times the quantity of baby clams released in the lake.

The long undisturbed period of nearly two years has facilitated at least two spawnings followed by spat settlement leading to the establishment of a new black clam bed in the lake thus enhancing the clam resource, said CMFRI scientist P Laxmilatha. "The production of black clams in Vembanad Lake had peaked to 75,592 tonnes in 2006 after which there was a steep decline to 42,036 tonnes in 2019. Fishermen under the Keecheri Ulnadan Matsya Thozhilali Sahakarana Sangham collect the clams using canoes and sell clam meat at the rate of 150 per kg. Each canoe collects 450 kg of clams per day. Apart from increasing the production of clams in the area, the project helped clam fishermen sustain their livelihood during the tough pandemic period, said scientist Vidya R.

Kerala: Kufos begins survey on model fishing village

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kufos-begins-survey-on-model-fishing-village/articleshow/88230267.cms

"The Kerala university of fisheries and ocean studies (Kufos) has started the third-phase survey for the model fishing village project at Chellanam. A door-to-door survey with a questionnaire to understand the socio-economic living standards of residents is being carried out. Ravaged by frequent sea surges and inundation, which led to residents protesting in large numbers against the lackadaisical attitude of authorities, the state government has authorized Kufos to adopt the coastal village and bring about an overall change in their livelihood. In the interim report submitted to the government, the university states that it was looking to bring in

bioshields using mangroves and other plants in the region.

Aquaculture and agriculture are the two aspects that are being looked into by the university. As part of the study, awareness programmes were conducted and different options of shore protection. Officials said that they would be working with the agriculture department and Kerala Agricultural University for revamping the agriculture sector at Chellanam. The report has also suggested re-establishment of canal and drainage systems by evacuating encroachers and unauthorized constructions, including those of the government. The report also suggested that efforts be taken to utilize the dredged sand for beach nourishment and heaps of sand near shore waters (Holland model) for coastal protection and depth abating of the shore line water.

Kerala: Fishing boat catches fire

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/fishing-boat-catches-fire/articleshow/88173009.cms

"A group of fishermen who set out to sea from Azheekal harbor in Kollam district narrowly escaped a tragedy after their trawling boat caught fire. Though the boat was completely gutted in fire, the fishermen were saved by those in other fishing boats in the vicinity. Neendakara coastal police have registered a case in this regard. The police said that the mishap occurred during the early hours of Wednesday. The boat involved in the mishap is named Velankanni Amma owned by Augustin of Anu Bhavan of Dhalavapuram. There were nine fishermen on board. They set off into the sea around 12.30 am. The boat caught fire around an hour later when it was around three nautical miles from the coast. The escaped fishermen told the police that fire is suspected to have broken out from a leak in the LP gas stove on the boat as the fire broke out when they turned on the stove to make tea. As soon as the fire spread, all the fishermen on board dived into the sea. Fishermen on other boats nearby rushed to their aid and pulled them out of water.

Kerala: Final survey for Chellanam model project to start today

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/dec/10/final-survey-for-keralas-chellanam-model-project-to-start-today-2393785.html

"The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) will launch the final survey for the Chellanam model fishing village project on Friday. A group of 80 Bachelor of Fisheries Science (BFSc) students will visit around 8,500 houses in the coastal village over the next 10 days to collect suggestions on steps to be taken to empower and rehabilitate villagers and find a permanent solution to their miseries. The survey will start from Mundamveli Kattiparambu at 9 am.

Kochi MLA K J Maxi, Kufos Vice-Chancellor K Riji John, registrar B Manoj Kumar and other

top officials will be present on the occasion. Kufos Chellanam nodal officer and head of aquaculture department Dinesh Kaippilly will lead the survey.We have prepared a questionnaire with 39 questions to understand the social and economic status of the villagers. We will record their suggestions on basic infrastructure facilities required and steps needed to address their woes. Each student will visit 100 households, ask questions and fill the questionnaires based on the residents' responses. The questions have been uploaded on Google forms and students will fill up the forms using the mobile app. We will then analyse this data and submit a detailed report to the government," said Dinesh. The Chellanam model will be a pilot project, which will be extended to other coastal villages based on the results here. The Kufos had submitted an interim report to the government earlier with suggestions on immediate measures to be taken to protect the villages that have been battered by coastal erosion. The report recommended steps to improve infrastructure, ensure economic and social security and address livelihood issues. It also suggested the construction of T-shaped groynes to check tidal waves.

Kerala: Boat owners seek govt. intervention in licence renewal issue

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/boat-owners-seek-govt-intervention-in-licence-renewal-issue/article37882748.ece

"The Fisheries department, which notified life span for fishing vessels of various makes about six months ago, has come under criticism from boat owners for the department move on renewing licences for 12-year-old wooden vessels, 15-year-old steel boats and 18 year-old fibre boats. While the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association, representing the non-traditional sector, in a submission before the State government alleged the norms were being stringently implemented in Ernakulam alone, Fisheries department sources said the norms were applicable to fishing vessels across Kerala. They said the norms were brought out to ensure the safety of fishers, who always faced constant threat to their lives because of weather and sea conditions. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of the Boat Operators' Association alleged that the norms were being implemented only in Ernakulam and that the new norms had made marine fishing ventures almost impossible, plunging thousands of boat owners, most of them comprising ordinary fishers, into a struggle to earn a livelihood.

Mr. Kalappurackal also alleged that the Fisheries department did not have sufficient personnel to provide fitness certificates for sea-going vessels and also claimed that traditional fishing boats were being spared from the purview of fitness checks. Fisheries department sources said the representation by boat owners was being considered with due seriousness but denied allegations of attempts to disrupt fishing operations or bias against any group of fishing operators. Mr. Kalappurackal said it would be best to test the sea-worthiness of fishing vessels by competent personnel, who could be drawn from the Ports Department. This is is the easiest

way to solve the problem, he added. He said most of the fishing boats under the department inspection were owned by groups of five to six ordinary fishers, who formed a group to earn a living out of their fishing ventures. He said the marine fishing sector provided employment to about 1.5 million people in the State and earned about Rs.40,000 crore annually.

Kerala: 45 percent of coastline facing erosion

https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=702640&u=

"A study conducted by the National Center for Coastal Research (NCCR) has found that 45 per cent of the coastline of Kerala is subject to varying degrees of erosion for over two and a half decades. The shocking fact was mentioned in the National Shore Line Change Assessment Mapping for Indian Coastal Report by the NCCR. According to the report, unscientific construction of structures such as fishing harbours, ports, groins and seawalls, sand mining, climate change, monsoon fluctuations, and rising sea levels due to global warming have largely contributed to the erosion of the coastline. The coastline of Kerala is 592.96 km long. The coastal area is up to seven and a half meters above sea level. This area, which covers only 10.25% (3979 sq km) of land area, is very densely populated. The population density of Kerala is 810 per sq km. However, in coastal areas, the population density is as high as 2168. Hot spots and threats 1. Thiruvananthapuram: Construction of harbour at Thengapattanam and dredging at the port 2. Kollam: Sand mining activities in Alappad 3. Alappuzha: Unscientific construction of harbour from Purakkad to Chellanam 4. Ponnani-Kasargod: Unscientific construction activities Rising sea level 1. During the period 1993-2015, the sea level in the country rose by 3.3 mm 2. Increase of 1.75 mm in sea level per year along Kochi coast 3. An area of 169 sq km in Kochi is at risk of floods.

Kerala: Meet Haritha, the first woman captain of fishing vessels in India

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/good-news/meet-haritha-the-first-woman-captain-of-fishing-vessels-in-india-qualified-captain-breaking-stereotypes-women-empowerment-1.6238790

"Many ships go fishing in the deep sea from India, but only a few women are in it. None of them is a captain. However, 'breaking the male dominance', KK Haritha, an Ezhupunna native, qualified as the captain of fishing vessels. Haritha is the first woman in the country to pass the 'Skipper' (Captain) examination for appointment to Marine Fisheries Research Vessels under the Union Government. The result of the exam that was held on November 23 was released on the previous day. She started her success stories in the ‘Mate of Fishing Vessels’ examination conducted by the Central Institute of Fisheries Nautical and Engineering (CIFNET). She sailed for 12 months on ships of the Union Government and private companies and received expert training. Also, she served as a Chief Officer of the Fisheries Survey of

India. Haritha attended the 'Skipper' test after sailing from Australia to the US aboard the Mumbai-based Synergy Mariners. After completing the Bachelor of Fisheries Science and Nautical Sciences (BFSC) in 2016, Haritha has been busy with her higher studies, international training and sailing. Haritha, who returned from a 20-day voyage, is set to sail again on December 10. She passed the exam amidst working. Haritha said the certificate would be issued within ten days. Haritha is the daughter of Kaithakuzhi Kunjappan and Sudharma of the Ezhupunna gram panchayat here

Kerala: Clam collectors a worried lot

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/clam-collectors-a-worried-lot/article37790648.ece

"With the stock hitting an all-time low, clam collectors of Ashtamudi were a worried lot in 2019. The year 2020 offered no solace, but by then they could identify some visible changes in the estuarine ecosystem. And today, their worst fears have come true as the fluctuations in hydrographic parameters have affected the spawning season of yellow clams (Paphia malabarica). Normally, the annual three-month ban on harvest begins in December, but inconsistent salinity and surface temperature has forced the Fisheries Department to push it to January. "In earlier times we could spot huge numbers of pea-sized bivalves during November-December. But this year we stopped collecting clams some two months ago as there was hardly any stock left. The clam collectors and women engaged in allied activities have been in total distress after the floods of 2018. Everything including the depth and current has changed over the years due to unscientific interventions and climate change. At present we have hit the rock bottom," says Prasannan, clam collector.

The decision to move the ban has been taken by the Clam Governing Council that manages the Marine Stewardship Council-certified fishery. "For the last three years we are experiencing a change in the intensity and pattern of rain. Usually the waterbody will achieve the salinity level required for spawning by November, but this year the situation is different. It's for the first time we are changing the ban period," says K.Suhair, Deputy Director, Fisheries Department. As part of efforts to replenish the stock and protect the livelihood of clam collectors, the Fisheries Department had set up sanctuaries in Ashtamudi and at present there is no seed to carry out relaying or collect the broodstock. "Whether the ban should be pushed permanently to January or February will be decided after further studies by various expert bodies including the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)," Mr. Suhair says. Apart from erratic rain and freshwater influx, sedimentation is also posing a huge challenge to the larval settlement. "Right now our clam beds are nearly empty. After the ban ends in April, the stocks may get replenished due to the long six-month window. The Fisheries Department has also promised to procure seeds from Vizhinjam hatchery and relay them in Ashtamudi. At present we are

pinning our hopes on that," adds Prasannan.

Kerala: Fishermen against Centre's fisheries bill, demand talk

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fishermen-against-centres-fisheries-bill-demand-talks/articleshow/88016880.cms

"Fishermen unions have urged the Centre not to introduce the Indian Marine Fisheries Bill-2021 in the Parliament in this session. There must be an extensive discussion among the various stakeholders before it is presented and passed by the Parliament, they have demanded. "We had met the fisheries minister N Murukan and submitted a memorandum when he visited Kochi on Nov 22. We had discussions with him and explained our concerns,"said Charles George, president, Kerala matsyathozhilali union. He said that among the 26 bills that are being presented in the Parliament, the Indian Maritime Fisheries Bill is also listed. "It is strange that the bill's name itself is misspelt," he added. The state has also sought changes in the bill and a series of webinars have been organised since June involving politicians, academicians, retired officials and union leaders.

Among the major concerns raised is that it is not in keeping with global best practices for marine fisheries regulations. The very term traditional fishers/small-scale fishers is not defined. Key fisheries terms are missing. In the memorandum submitted to the Centre based on the discussions, it was pointed out there are mismatches between policy statements in the national policy of marine fisheries-2017 and the proposed bill-2021. There is a major objection to the clause which define that coast guard will enforce the fisheries laws. It is agreeable that they are meant for surveillance, sea safety and defence related issues. "We are not in agreement with the introduction of 'companies' in marine fishing sector. We prefer larger investments through fishermen cooperatives," said George. "If the Centre is not going to defer the bill until extensive discussions are held, we will take to protests," George added.

Kerala: Satellite data reveals 41% of state's coastline is facing erosion: Govt

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/satellite-data-reveals-41-of-kerala-s-coastline-is-facing-erosion-govt-121113001782_1.html

"Satellite data from 1990 to 2018 has revealed that 41 per cent of the coastline of Kerala is subject to varying degrees of erosion, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday. ""Some stretches of India's shoreline are subject to varying degrees of erosion due to natural causes or anthropogenic activities. The National Shoreline Change Assessment Mapping for Indian coast

carried out by the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) using 28 years of satellite data from 1990 to 2018 revealed that 41 per cent of coastline of Kerala is subject to varying degree of erosion,"" Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Parshottam Rupala told the Lok Sabha said in reply to a question by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor. Stating that the coastal erosion does impact coastal communities residing in the erosion prone areas including fishermen, Rupala said that the Department of Fisheries, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme - Blue Revolution Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries, implemented during the period from 2015-16 to 2019-20 - provided financial assistance of Rs 93.84 crore for fishermen welfare-related activities including construction of fishermen houses.

Besides, under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) being implemented with effect from 2020-21, a sum of Rs 50.89 crore has also been provided to the Kerala government for implementation of welfare related activities, including livelihood and nutritional support to socio-economically backward active traditional fishers' family, he said. Fisheries sector plays an important role in the socio-economic development of about 28 million fisher-folk, providing food and livelihood security, the government said adding, the contribution of the fisheries sector in the National Gross Value Added (GVA) during 2019-20 stood at Rs 1,26,370 crore (at constant basic prices; 2011-12) constituting 0.95 per cent to the national GVA and 6.42 per cent of the agricultural GVA. Tharoor's question, however, was about GDP and not GVA. He had asked: ""Whether the country's fisheries sector enormously contributes to food security by employing more than 14.5 million people and contributing to 1.07 per cent of the GDP and 5.37 per cent of the agricultural GDP.""

Kerala: Experts recommended fishermen at Vypeen should adopt novel methods where they can increase fish harvest and thereby increase their income

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/call-for-novel-fishing-methods-at-vypeen/articleshow/87724018.cms

"Experts recommended fishermen at Vypeen should adopt novel methods where they can increase fish harvest and thereby increase their income. The recommendations were put forward on the second day of the workshop on ‘Vypeen island protection and sustainable development’ on Monday. “The availability of quality fish is coming down in the state. Hence, prospects for aquaculture methods like cage fish farming and biofloc is high at Vypeen which is a favourable place for fish production. “Farmers can cultivate and harvest Vannamei shrimp (whiteleg shrimp) on the compounds of their houses itself. It has high export opportunities,” said Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) registrar B Manoj Kumar. “Shrimp can be cultivated in biofloc method and harvested in seven months.

By expanding pokkali farming, cage farming can be done along with prawn farming at pokkali fields. Aquaponics method also can increase job opportunities,” he said. Other than creating job

opportunities associated with fish farming, export of marine and value-added products also will create employment. The workshop also discussed the prospects of inland tourism in the area by giving thrust to the tradition of the island, culture, history, pokkali farming and water resources. “Since the population density is high at Vypeen, possibilities of setting up small-scale industries in electronics, organic vegetable farming and waste management can be explored,” Kumar said. The workshop is held in the backdrop of climate change induced incidents at Vypeen. The area witnesses recurring episodes of sea erosion and high tide. It has been envisaged to formulate a master plan for the island by consolidating the expert views and traditional knowledge emerged at the workshop. The workshop will conclude on Tuesday and water resources minister Roshy Augustine will inaugurate the valedictory function.

Kerala: Erratic weather stumps fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/erratic-weather-stumps-fishers/article37474266.ece

"In older days, Thulapathu (tenth day of the month of Thulam) in the fishing calendar used to indicate a period prosperity, but not any more. While squally weather has left fishing fleets idling, traditional fishers are worried over erratic patterns that make indigenous knowledge irrelevant. They point out a steady rise in weather warnings and loss of fishing days during the last few years, making 2021 the hardest year to survive. “In 2019, we stayed off waters for 59 days due to adverse weather conditions and rough sea warnings. In 2020, it was 60 and now we have crossed 70 days in November 2021. The number of fishing units have come down and at present loss of fishing days and low catch have left the coastal community in distress. The relief measures offered by the Government are also not adequate to tide over the crisis,” says Jackson Pollayil, president, Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation. Though fishers are familiar with weather playing spoilsport, unexpected patterns are increasing the difficulty and risk in carrying out fishing activity.

“Traditional fishers are largely dependent on indigenous wisdom passed down orally from older generations. We know the currents well and are able to identify storms strong enough to capsize boats. We know the winds of different seasons and when rains gain momentum. But, of late, all our calculations have gone wrong,” says Xavier, a fisher from Kollam. The fishers are equally worried over the dip in catch, especially pelagic species. “During the six-month season we usually see an abundance of pelagic fish such as mackerel, anchovy, and sardine. But this time only mackerel was available on a regular basis. Sardine catch was limited and fishers from some districts totally missed the shoals,” he adds. Mr. Jackson says though they had approached the Government demanding a package to survive in the famine-like situation, no action had been taken.

He adds that getting fair price for the catch has become a task after COVID-19. “While they are

supporting exporters by offering subsidies, we are forced to sell our catch at minimal rates. Demand has increased, but we are receiving no proportionate profit," he says. In December, the traditional sector is expected to enter the annual dry spell that will continue till summer. "As temperature rises, the catch will become scarce. With high fuel prices and low catch, we won't be able to venture into the sea," he adds.

Karnataka and Kerala: Low pressure formed over Arabian sea on Karnataka coast; widespread rain likely in Kerala

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/low-pressure-formed-over-arabian-sea-on-karnataka-coast-widespread-rain-likely-in-kerala-kerala-cyclone-monsoon-indian-meteorological-department-1.6182779

"A low pressure area has formed over the middleeast Arabian Sea on the coast of Karnataka. It is learned that a cyclone is taking shape in the middleeast-southeast Arabian Sea near Karnataka and Northern Kerala. The cyclone is likely to move in west-northwest direction and intensify in the next 48 hours, the authorities informed. This is the eighth low pressure that formed during the 47 days of monsoon. Meantime, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted widespread rain in Kerala for Tuesday and Wednesday, and isolated heavy rainfall in several districts in northern Kerala under the impact of the cyclone. However, there is no further threat as the cyclone is moving away from Kerala. At the same time, authorities have banned fishing on the Kerala-Lakshadweep coast and on the Northern Kerala coast till November 16 and the Karnataka coast till November 17.

They have forecasted gusty winds with speeds of up to 60 kmph in some areas. Meantime, a low-pressure area formed over the North Andaman Sea is likely to move west-northwest and intensify over the next 24 hours into a well-marked low-pressure depression. It will then head west and reach the Bay of Bengal by November 18 and reach the coast of south Andhra Pradesh and north Tamil Nadu.

Kerala: Minister Saji Cherian says Fisheries sector has the potential to speed up State's progress

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-minister-saji-cherian-says-fisheries-sector-has-the-potential-to-speed-up-states-progress/article37344199.ece

"Fisheries is one potential sector other than tourism capable of accelerating the State's progress and Kerala should chalk out innovative projects to reach the global stage, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian said here on Friday. The Minister was speaking after inaugurating a modern fish-processing plant, fresh fish stall and a marine resources food court that sells products through the MIMI mobile app at the modern fish market at Karikode. ""It is vital for Kerala to increase fish production and strengthen its marketing strategies in fisheries sector. We

have to focus more on inland fishing and fish farming for that,"" he said. Pointing out how countries such as Vietnam and Bangladesh, and States such as Andhra Pradesh emerged as major players in the international export market, he added that marketing strategies should be expanded for economic growth. Chemical-free fish An initiative of the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation's (KSCADC) Parivarthanam project, MIMI Fish offers chemical-free fish procured from traditional fishers and reliable farms through MIMI outlets and home delivery service.

Through the project, the Government aims at bringing about a qualitative socio-economic change in coastal areas and the lives of fishing communities. MIMI Fish, which was launched on August 29 this year, made its first round of extension in early September, as KSCADC opened outlets in 29 places in Kollam district. Apart from fresh fish, MIMI Fish offers a range of value-added products, including fish pickle, fried fish, chammanthi powder, fish curries and dried fish. Kundara MLA P.C. Vishnunath presided over the function. Former Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma was the chief guest. Indian Council of Agriculture and Research-Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR-CIFT) director Ravi Shankar C.N., Kottankara grama panchayat president Devadas R., district panchayat member N.S. Prasannakumar, Kottankara panchayat vice president Saritha Prathap, Kollam Fisheries deputy director K.K. Suhair and KSCADC managing director Sheik Pareeth also spoke on the occasion.

Kerala: Assembly passes four Bills on fisheries

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-assembly-passes-four-bills-on-fisheries/article37326341.ece

"The Assembly on Wednesday passed four important Bills pertaining to the fisheries sector, including the Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Maintenance of Quality Bill, 2021, aimed at streamlining the auctioning process, ensuring the quality of the fish sold, and curbing exploitation of fishers by middlemen. The House also passed the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Amendment) Bill, 2021; the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2021; and the Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture (Amendment) Bill, 2021. Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian said the four Bills were designed to bring in sweeping changes in the sector. The Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Maintenance of Quality Bill requires fish auctions to be conducted only through notified landing centres, harbours, and markets. (This provision does not apply to retail sales by fishers).

A sum not exceeding 5% of the auction amount can be collected as commission. Forty per cent of this commission will be returned to the fishers concerned as an annual production bonus.

Norms for varsity The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Amendment) Bill, 2021, is designed to ensure that the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) adheres to the norms set by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Mr. Cherian said. The amendments are also essential for raising the university to international standards, he said. Inland fisheries The Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture (Amendment) Bill passed on Wednesday provides for the formation of the State Inland Fisheries Management Council and the district-level aquaculture development agencies. Inland fisheries hold a huge untapped potential in Kerala, Mr. Cherian said. He cited the example of Andhra Pradesh where production had grown from 4.07 lakh tonnes in 2001-02 to 36.1 lakh tonnes in 2019-20. In Kerala, the production had grown to just 2.35 lakh tonnes from 0.85 lakh tonnes in 2001, according to him. In all, 2,697 amendments, including general amendments, were proposed and considered by the House for the four Bills, Speaker M.B. Rajesh said. The Assembly will convene again at 9 a.m. on November 8.

Kerala: Kerosene price hike puts traditional fishing community in more trouble

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/kerosene-price-hike-puts-traditional-fishing-community-in-more-trouble-kerala-fisherfolks-kerosene-1.6149377

"Amid a swirl of miseries, the recent kerosene price hike has put traditional fisherfolk in more trouble. Kerosene price was hiked by Rs 8 in one go and is reportedly the steepest hike in history. Fisherfolk are relying on kerosene mainly for the operation of boats attached with outboard engine and carriers of inboard engine boats. The unexpected hike in kerosene price has put fishers in dire straits. Government mechanism not providing ample relief Wednesday, the rate of one litre kerosene in Matsyafed's Valanjavazhi pump was at Rs 106.99. Similarly, in public distribution depots, the price of one litre of kerosene increased from Rs 47 to Rs 55, that too in a single day. Depending on black market Due to limited availability of kerosene at subsidised rate, the fisherfolk are forced to rely on black market. It costs Rs 95 per litre. To get kerosene from Matsyafed, the money has to be settled immediately. The subsidy will be credited later into the account. Notably, the subsidy is due for three months. The maximum quantity of kerosene that can be sourced from both Matsyafed fuel pumps and depots of public distribution department is limited to 260 litres.

However, even a five-person boat will require double the amount of kerosene. This in turn

forces fishers to find alternative sources. Poor catch and plummeting fish prices The prolonged unfavourable weather conditions and high tides affected the working days of the fishingfolk. The price of fishes caught and made available for sale is low too. For instance, on Wednesday, goldstripe sardinella catch at Ambalappuzha was sold at Rs 10 to Rs 12. The kerosene price hike has left seagoing fishers in new swirl. More often, their plight is to return with catch that is be sold at rate that cannot even meet the fuel expense. Protest on November 9 Matsya Thozhilali Federation, affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), is organizing a protest on November 9, raising the demand that kerosene price hike should be revoked. Informing about the protest, the federation president TJ Anjalose and General Secretary T Raghuvaran, urged the Centre to provide quota of subsided kerosene.

Kerala: Fisherman dies in lightning strike while fishing in sea

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/fisherman-dies-in-lightning-strike-while-fishing-in-sea-thiruvananthapuram-1.6136813

"A fisherman died after being struck by lightning while he was fishing in the sea. The deceased was identified as Thumba native Alexander Peter (32). Louis Daniel, Simon and Raju, who accompanied Alexander, escaped unhurt. The incident took place about 16 kilometres away from Thumba coast on Friday by 10.30 pm. They left the shore on a fibre boat owned by Louis Daniel by 4 in the evening. Alexander fell unconscious after being struck by lightning. Immediately, they returned and reached the shore by 12 night. Though he was rushed to a private hospital in Kazhakkoottam immediately, his life could not be saved. The inquest was completed by Vizhinjam Coastal Police and postmortem was carried out at medical college. Last rites were held at Thumba Fathima Matha hospital. The police registered a case in connection with the incident.

Kerala: Five pc commission for govt: Auction related ordinance raises concern among fisherfolk

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/five-pc-commission-for-govt-auction-related-ordinance-raises-concern-among-fisherfolk-fisherfolk-kerala-1.6133622

"An ordinance issued in September 2020 is back in limelight as it has been approved by Subject Committee in Kerala Assembly on Friday. The ordinance which directs to pay five percent commission from fish auctions happening at harbours and fish landing centres should be given to government, is about to become an act, raising concern among fisherfolk. The ordinance issued during the final lap of previous LDF government had triggered protest then itself. According to the owners of fishing vessels, the proposed mandate will make the owner or the entities associated with the vessel liable to pay the commission. The amount will be consumed up from the earnings received by fisherfolk. According to the bill, the commission

will be divided among auctioneer, Fishermen Development Welfare Co-operative Society, local body, fish landing centre/harbour/fish market management society and government. The ratio can be decided by the government by issuing an official notification. MP TN Prathapan has urged that five percent commission should be reduced to one percent commission.

Meanwhile, fisheries department maintained that the act will prevent exploitation in fishing sector. “The act is for protecting commoner fisherfolk from exploitation. With this law, there will be proper framework for fish auction and sale. It will be implemented in such a way that among the five percentage received by the government, two percentage will be returned to fisherfolk itself,” said Deputy Director of Fisheries (Marine) M Thajudheen. Contrastingly, according to Mathiyas Peter, president of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, it would be better if the law is applicable only for those who have taken loan from Matsyafed or Fishermen Development Welfare Co-operative Society. It is not legitimate for the government to take commission from those who do not get any allowance from government.

Kerala: Fishers on Mossodi beach yet to get compensation for destroyed houses

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-on-mossodi-beach-yet-to-get-compensation-for-destroyed-houses/article37262204.ece

"Whenever the meteorological department issues alerts of heavy rain in the wake of a depression in the Arabian sea, fishermen such as M. Abdul Majeed and others on the Moosodi beach at Manjeshwar in Kasaragod have a sleepless night. For the past two years, such alerts have portended a nightmare for them with houses being damaged or totally destroyed in the cyclone and the consequent sea erosion. There has been no significant support from the government, except for a small compensation, which some of them have already used for paying the rent for the houses to which they have been forced to move following the disaster. Riyaz, a fisherman here, who lost his house two years ago, received a compensation of Rs.95,000. But since then, he has been living in a rented house with his family. “I have finished the money paying the rent for the house, which is Rs.5,000 per month. Now, we have lost all hope of receiving any help from the government”, he said. Mr. Majeed, another fisherman, is forced to live at his brother’s house after his own dwelling collapsed in front of him during cyclone Tauktae earlier this year. “My house was partly damaged in 2018, but in March this year, the seawater completely destroyed the house in front of us,” he said. Except for empty promises of compensation by the government of paying Rs.10 lakh for construction of a new house, they had received anything, he lamented.

After knocking on every door of government offices, he finally got a relief of Rs.95,000 recently. But the officials had not still confirmed when the promised Rs.10 lakh would be paid. More than 10 persons now live in the house belonging Mr. Majeed's brother. That house too is near the beach and the fear of waves taking away this house too constantly looms in their mind. Till now, the Fisheries department has helped in constructing houses for only two fishermen who were affected prior to 2018. Another fisherman, who approached the court, received the complete compensation of Rs.10 lakh. Many here lamented that they were not financially sound to approach the court against the inaction of the authorities. However, P.V. Satheesan, Deputy Director of Fisheries Department, said they would allot the compensation to fishermen families if they identified a suitable land for constructing the house. Many of them had not identified such land while several others were not fishermen or were working in other places, including abroad, he said. Mr. Satheesan said that the authorities were constructing flats for 140 families at Kozhipadi in Kumbala at a cost of Rs.23 crore.

However, members of the fishermen community said there was an attempt to uproot them from their land. They alleged that flats were constructed to help people who had a vested interest in their land. They demanded that the fishing community be given the land near to the beach where they live now.

Kerala: Thottappally harbour to be upgraded to global standards

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/thottappally-harbour-to-be-upgraded-to-global-standards/article37214204.ece

"The State Government is planning to upgrade the Thottappally fishing harbour on a par with international standards, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. Replying to a submission by Ambalappuzha MLA H. Salam in the Assembly on Thursday, Mr. Cherian said the department was preparing an estimate of Rs.112 crore for constructing a 436-m breakwater on the northern side and increasing the length of the breakwater on the southern side, among other works. The first phase of the harbour was completed in 2011. However, the harbour remains almost dysfunctional due to heavy silting in the harbour basin, which makes navigation an arduous task. The Central Water and Power Research Station (CWPRS), Pune, which conducted a study, recommended increasing the length of the breakwater on the southern side and construction of a new breakwater on the northern side to prevent the accumulation of silt. Dredging rights As part of the second phase of the development of the harbour, the Government had sanctioned Rs.13.38 crore under the Ockhi package for repairing the sunken portion of the breakwater on the southern side and increasing its length.

Besides, the Indian Rare Earths has been given permission to dredge the basin and separate minerals from the sand. Mr. Cherian said the development of the harbour was a priority for the Government. He said that it was important to prevent siltation of the basin before going ahead

with big projects at the harbour. Big projectAs recommended by the CWPRS, work has been launched to increase the length of the breakwater on the southern side. The 436- m new breakwater on the northern side will be constructed 300 m from the existing groyne there. Once the works are over and the breakwaters succeed in preventing siltation, the Government will contemplate implementing a big project with the aim of upgrading the Thottappally harbour on a par with international standards," Mr. Cherian said.

Kerala: Very heavy rainfall likely in Kerala on Friday; IMD issues orange alert to 6 districts

https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2021/10/28/very-heavy-rainfall-likely-in-kerala-imd-issues-orange-alert-in-.html

"Six districts in Kerala are likely to receive a spell of heavy to very heavy rainfall on Friday. The India Meteorological Department has issued an orange alert in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Idukki districts for October 29. The spell of heavy rain is likely to continue till October 31, Sunday, as a result of two low- pressure areas formed over the Arabian Sea and the central part of South Bay of Bengal. The IMD, in its latest bulletin, has stated that a low-pressure area has formed over central parts of South Bay of Bengal with associated cyclonic circulation extending up to 5.8 km over mean sea level. It is likely to move westward in the next few days. This is the fifth instance of low pressure formation over the Bay of Bengal in October. In addition to this, a depression has formed over the Arabian Sea.

Under the influence of these two low-pressure formations, the IMD has predicted heavy rainfall and thunderstorms over Kerala between October 27 and 31. (A depression is an area of low pressure.) A trough extending from the southeastern Arabian Sea off the the Kerala coast to the central-eastern Arabian Sea off the Karnataka coast has also been identified. Kerala may also experience gusty wind speeding upto 40kmph in some places, the IMD predicted. An orange alert is declared heavy to very heavy rainfall (115.6-204.4mm) is expected, while a yellow alert is issued when heavy rain (64.5-115.5mm) is expected. Latest rainfall forecast issued by IMD Orange Alert Oct 29, Friday: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Idukki. Yellow alert Oct 28, Thursday: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Wayanad. Oct 29, Friday: Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Wayanad. Oct 30, Saturday: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad. Oct 31, Sunday: Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Palakkad.

Warning for fisherfolk Fishermen are advised against venturing out to the sea from October 29

till 31. On October 27 and 28, tides reaching the height of 2 to 3 metres are likely to hit the Kerala coast. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has advised those living along the sea shores to move to safe places on these days. It has also advised to securely lodge fishing vessels and boats at harbours. People are advised not to visit beaches and sea shores in the next few days. Kerala has been battered by a slew of landslides and floods in recent weeks after incessant rains in the region. Forty-two lives have been lost to various rain-related incidents across the state including two major landslides which were reported in Kottayam's Koottickal and Idukki's Kokkayar. According to the KSDMA, at least 90 houses were destroyed and over 700 were partially damaged. Experts attribute the extreme weather events to various causes, including the warming of the seas, unabated developmental activities wrecking the land and waterbodies and delayed withdrawal of the monsoon. The southwest monsoon withdrew from the entire country on Monday, making it the seventh-most delayed retreat since 1975, according to the national weather agency. Simultaneously, the northeast monsoon rains (Thulavarsham as it is known locally) commenced over southeast Peninsular India bringing rains to Tamil Nadu. Kerala has already received more rain than what is usually received in the period from October 1 to December 31.

Kerala: Rising fuel prices, dwindling catch put fishing industry at risk of collapse

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/rising-fuel-prices-dwindling-catch-put-keralas-fishing-industry-risk-collapse-156951

"Every year after the trawling ban (that is enforced to conserve marine life) is lifted mid-monsoon, the fishing harbours in Kerala would buzz day and night for weeks. Boats with fresh coats of paint would arrive and depart in batches. The windy wharves smelling of fish would be a riot of colours and sounds: nylon nets and funky floats, joiners hammering down on deck planks, the syrang (chief skipper) and crew running last minute checks on everything from wireless sets to rusty anchors. All this amid the clamour of loading workers, auction agents, merchants and middlemen. On the morning of August 12, less than a fortnight after this year's trawl ban was lifted, the mood at Beypore, the most prominent fishing harbour in north Kerala, historically known for ship building, was far from festive. Kerala, the southernmost state in India’s west coast, forms 10% (590 km) of the country’s coastline. A strict COVID-19 protocol, which required a negative RT-PCR test to enter the premises was in place, but the pandemic was only one of the reasons for the lack of cheer. Only two boats were being fueled, readying for a trip later in the day. The diesel prices on all three pumps at Beypore harbour on that day hovered at around Rs 95 per litre for diesel.

In 2019, a litre of diesel was around Rs 70. “Normally, in the months of August, September and October we had work day and night as boats keep coming in with the catch,” said Rajagopal KP, a loading/unloading worker and district treasurer of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), a

trade union with links to the Hindu nationalist Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS). “There wouldn't be an inch of space for your toe as the harbour would be full of fish and people. We would not even have time to clean the harbour,"" Rajagopal said. But this year, the work hours have sharply reduced, impacting boat owners and fishers. Over the last few years, increasing fuel costs and dwindling catch due to exploitation have made the going tough for the sector. It has also led to the proliferation of several unsustainable practices: juvenile fishing and targeting of Low-value Bycatch (LVB), which supply fish meal and fish oil (FMFO) units. While juvenile fishing can deplete a particular species as the immature fish are caught before they can replenish the population by spawning, bycatch can affect the marine ecosystem by changing the availability of a particular species. Rising fuel costs Beypore has close to 600 trawl boats but only a hundred or so have made fishing trips since July 31.

Many boat owners were not sure they would be able to afford fishing trips outside the season because of the high cost of diesel. ""My boat returned with a catch worth Rs 1.5 lakh after 3 days. I had filled 1,300 litres (of fuel) at a cost of Rs 123,500. It's a loss any way you look at it. You need to land a catch of Rs 5 lakh in 3-4 days to survive,"" said Mustafa Haji, a boat owner and member of Beypore harbour management committee. (While trawl boats in Kerala do not receive diesel subsidies, traditional fishers are eligible for subsidised kerosene. In comparison, states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu do provide diesel subsidies ranging from Rs 8 to Rs 10 per litre to fishers.) ‘Monetising anything that ends up in the net’ Tropical waters are rich in multiple species, and for the boats that go out, catch may vary from year to year. Shrimp boats in Kerala target karikkadi chemmeen (Arabian red shrimp) during the season. Other trawl boats typically target threadfin breams (kilimeen) and squid (kanava).

However due to dwindling catches, a section of boats now target the Low-value Bycatch (LVB), which acts as a strong economic incentive for workers – creating whatever value they can from fishing trips. ""The amount of 'podi charakku,' (Kochi parlance for small-sized bycatch) has gone up over the years,"" said Suresh NS, a boat owner, who doubles as a traditional fisher. Studies have shown that LVB volume has indeed been steadily increasing. In Kozhikode district where Beypore lies, the LVB landed in 2011 constituted 26% of the total landings. The official figure for Kochi, where Munambam harbour is located, for that year was only 7.2%. ""Now, nearly half the catch that we get to sort is bycatch, which goes to fish meal factories. Everyone knows it's harmful and would affect our future. But it has come to a point where the industry cannot survive unless they monetise anything that ends up in the net,"" said Prakasan Vennakkattu, a member of the Harbour Management Society, Beypore.

The spurt in commercial utilisation of LVB by fish meal units, mostly as feed for aquaculture, adversely impacts the sustainability of fish stocks, the marine ecosystem, and protein availability of the rural poor. It's a sentiment shared by Joseph Joseph, secretary of Swathanthra

Lela Thozhilali Union, an organisation of auctioneers at Sakthikulangara in Kollam, a major fishing port in the south of Kerala. ""Targeting of juveniles and bycatch will ring the death knell for the sector. But what's the choice? It's not just the fuel cost that has gone up. Look at the investment and the number of people the sector supports,"" said Joseph, who also attests that bycatch sold as fish meal comprises around 50% of the catch. Auction agents like Joseph act as intermediaries to both exporters and fish meal units. Still, Kerala has only a handful of fish meal units when compared to neighbouring Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It's been six years since the state legislated minimum legal size (MLS) of fishes in an attempt to reduce juvenile fishing (with 14 species listed initially in 2015 and 44 later in 2017). In 2017, the state banned the use of illegal nets and mandated mesh sizes by amending its Marine Fisheries Regulation Act, to prevent overfishing and ensure sustainability.

Scientifically, juvenile fish are those yet to reach sexual maturity. Although the 2019 annual report of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), recorded a considerable reduction in the juvenile harvest of MLS-listed species along the Kerala coast in 2019 compared to 2018, the problem persists. Juvenile harvest of just two species -- Randall's threadfin bream and Brushtooth Lizardfish -- resulted in an estimated economic loss of Rs 38 crore and Rs 32 crore respectively. Economic costs aside, the National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017, has acknowledged the practice of LVB could undermine the integrity of the marine ecosystem. The fisheries department enforces a fine of Rs 2.5 lakh (around US$3380) if it intercepts juvenile fish on board a trawl boat. The catch is then impounded and auctioned off, the revenue going to state coffers. Failure to remit the imposed fine can also result in seizure and sale of craft. Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal, secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association (AKFBOA), alleges that in the last 3.5 years, since the new amendments came into force, there were 123 instances in which fines were imposed on boats for alleged juvenile fishing, but this could not be verified.

Data provided by the state fisheries department shows that they registered a total of 453 cases for various violations under the Kerala Marine Fisheries Regulation (KMFR) Act, ever since the rules formulated under it came into force in 2018. The department has raised a total of Rs 4.89 crore (around $6.5 lakh) as fines and through auction of fish from violators. The year 2018-19 witnessed 150 violations raising Rs 1.44 crore, 2019-20 (Rs 2.66 crore) and 2020-21 (Rs 78.8 lakh). The number of patrolling trips increased in 2019-20 (an average of 182 per month) compared to 2018-19 (156 trips). Aneesh P, Assistant Director, Fisheries, Vypeen, said the boat owners' association's claim could not be verified as the department did not have a breakup of KMFR violations with respect to juvenile fishing, but it is nonetheless indicative of how pervasive juvenile fishing is. ""We operate with very little manpower. If we start registering cases for violations, none of these boats would be able to go out to sea,"" he said. The state has jurisdiction only up to 12 nautical miles and technically they cannot act against a fishing vessel who fishes outside the limit but the KMFR Act (Amended 2017) has provisions

that make possession, transportation and sale of fishes below MLS an illegal act. Kerala's fishers critical of Act The AKFBOA, which represents the nearly 5,000 trawl boat owners in the state, is critical of the penal provisions of the Act.

They argue that zero tolerance on juvenile fish, as mandated, is unfair and impossible to comply with. ""We fish in a multi-species environment. It is impossible for a trawl boat to exclude juveniles anytime of the year. If they want to end juvenile fishing, they would have to end bottom trawling first, but it would come at a terrible cost to our economy,"" said Joseph Xavier. Scientists engaged in fisheries conservation consider this a valid argument. The CMFRI had originally recommended action against boats only if the juvenile content was more than 50% of the total catch, indicating that fishers wilfully engaged in an unsustainable practice. ""It's true that trawl boat operators have no idea of what lies beneath as they draw their nets. Our idea was to create awareness regarding unsustainable fishing, which is detrimental to their future; never to penalise them,"" said Dr Sunil K Mohamed, a former principal scientist with CMFRI and chairperson of Sustainable Seafood Network of India (SSNI). According to Mohamed, for close to three decades, since the 60s, CIFT scientists spent their energy designing fishing gear that would bring in more catch.

A paradigm shift in thinking happened in the 90s, when wild-caught fish catch began to dwindle. The total marine fish landings in Kerala during 2019 stood at 5,43,836 tonnes, 15.3% lower than that of the previous year (2018). Mesh sizes and codends Trawl boats in Kerala are also bound by law to use two types of square mesh codends (the narrowed end of a trawl net: one for shrimp (25mm) and another for fish and cephalopods (34mm) developed by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technologies (CIFT). Square mesh codends ensure a catch of uniform size, eligible for a higher unit rate. The drag on the net while hauling is also less, which means boats can save on precious fuel. This is the message Network for Fish Quality Management and Sustainable Fishing (NETFISH), an agency under the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) had been trying to impart to fishers for the past few years. ""We optimised the mesh size for square mesh codends based on the mean length of mature fishes and some mathematical modelling. It's the best bycatch reduction device we have and the making is based on a simple concept that the fishers can easily adopt,"" said V R Madhu, principal scientist, Fishing Technology Division, CIFT.

In a multi-species environment, the minimum legal sizes would differ from coast to coast; the mesh size of codends would have to be optimised for different states, said Madhu. ""Our 2019 experiment with CIFT and TN fisheries department showed that when the diamond mesh codend was used, the volume of juvenile fish that got caught was around 12 to 15 kg for every hour. This reduced to 3 to 4 kg when square mesh codend was used,"" said Dr S Velvizhi, co-ordinator, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation's (MSSRF) 'Fish for All' Centre. The foundation develops and promotes strategies for economic growth of rural communities. The

fisheries department, through Matsyafed, a state-run cooperative. is offering a 50% subsidy for two square mesh codends for each boat with a unit cost of Rs 15,000, but the adoption has been negligible so far. In February this year, the AKFBOA cooperated with a square mesh codend demonstration held at Kollam, but even though the cod-ends are subsidised and have been shown to be effective, members are apprehensive about whether they would be feasible in practice. Trawl boats carry around six types of nets in duplicates and even triplicates. If a codend gets damaged, it would need to be replaced.

""Trawl nets scrape the bottom of the sea-bed and it can get filled with dirt in no-time," said Mathias. Fishers also aren't convinced that the mortality rate of fishes that escape would be low. "The subsidy offered by the government does not seem attractive," he added. No uniform regulations yet Differences between state policies are also a point of contention. Smitha Nair, Joint Director, state fisheries department, emphasised the need for uniform regulatory environment and coordination between coastal states. States like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu provide diesel subsidies to fishers, which gives them an unfair advantage. While Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have MLS for select species, there are no penal provisions in case of violation in the case of the former. ""There are 9 coastal states in India, 5 in the west and 4 in the east. We all fish from the same waters. Boats from our neighbouring state can come to Kerala's coast, catch fish and go back to sell them with less legal hassles.

There needs to be a uniform law,"" said Peter Mathias, president, AKFBOA, based in Kollam. Alex Ninan, president, Kerala chapter, Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI), said that while Kerala has shown leadership by legislating for sustainability, the failure of other states to follow the model is a curse for the entire industry. ""We don't have a national fishing policy yet. If all states adhere to laws with regard to juvenile fishing and use of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs), such as cod-ends, everything will fall into place,"" he said. But until that happens, Kerala's fishers continue to feel they are at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in other states.

Kerala: Devastating floods have hit wide areas of Kerala: The Fisher people living at the low areas are worst affected: NPSSFW & SMTF(I) requests Government of Kerala for urgent relief & rehabilitation

"National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers [NPSSFW] and Swathandra Mathyathizilali Federation (Inland) [SMTFI], invited urgent attention of the Government of Kerala to the necessity to provide immediate assistance to the hundreds of inland fisher people who have lost their livelihoods and jobs due to the recent floods in Kerala. Inland fisher people in Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Alappuzha and Ernakulam districts have lost a lot of fishing equipment due to the floods and have also lost their livelihood in fish vending and allied

occupations. Restoration of the above infrastructure will require months of hard work and huge financial burden will be required for procuring fishing boats, nets and other tools. The Covid-19 pandemic has already severely affected the livelihood of fishing community.

NPSSFW and SMTF(I) demanded that the Government of Kerala and the Department of Fisheries should immediately intervene and provide financial assistance and equipment, including boats and nets, to protect the livelihood of inland fishing communities of the state.

Kerala: Scheme for fisherwomen groups

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/scheme-for-fisherwomen-groups/article37146979.ece

"Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) under the Fisheries Department has invited applications from fisherwomen groups to start enterprise units under Theeramythri project. Seventy five percent of the project cost will be grant, 20% bank loan and 5% beneficiary contribution. Application forms are available at the offices of SAF and Matsyabhavan. Last date for accepting applications is November 2. Call 9633076431, 9745403570 or 9895332871 for details.

Kerala: Fishermen reach Aluva for rescue operations

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kerala-rain-fishermen-reach-aluva-for-rescue-operations/article37073046.ece

"Fishermen from Kannamali, Njarakkal and Chellanam reached Aluva here by Tuesday afternoon to carry out rescue operations in their boats in the wake of a possible flood situation in the region following the opening of shutters of Cheruthoni dam in the morning. The boats were transported to Pulinchodu in Aluva in heavy carriers arranged by the Motor Vehicles Department. Their presence rekindled memories of the 'heroic warriors' of the State, who had ventured into the narrow lanes and vulnerable locations that got submerged in the devastating floods in 2018. The fishermen reiterated their commitment towards protecting people while saying that they were ready to face any situation. "We had braved all odds in the floods in 2018 and were successful in saving hundreds of lives," they said. P.M. Shabeer, Regional Transport Officer, Ernakulam, said that they had arranged the transportation of nearly 25 boats for rescue operations in Aluva and North Paravur. Ten boats already deployed in Aluva were sourced from the fishing harbour in Chellanam. For rescue operations in North Paravur, boats will be arranged from Kalamukku fishing harbour in Vypeen, he said. The preparations were done in association with Fisheries and Revenue departments. Rescue boats will also be deployed in Kalady and nearby areas along the banks of the Periyar after assessing the flood situation, according to officials.

Kerala: Great time for fishermen as Parappar dam shutters opened

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/offbeat/great-time-for-fishermen-as-parappar-dam-shutters-opened-kallada-river-1.6091997

"It is a great time for the fishermen in the area as the shutters of Parappar dam opened. They adventurously captured the fish that reach Kallada river through the dam's shutters. The fish falling from the shutters are caught by jumping from the bridge into Kallada river. Many of the fish weigh 15 to 20 kilograms. Due to heavy current in the river, the people have to swim across almost half a kilometre to reach the shore with the fish. These fish fetch upto Rs 2000-2500. The visitors who reach the location are more curious to buy the fish. Years back, hatchlings of catla fish and tilapia were deposited in the dam.

Kerala: Extreme weather events in Kerala linked to climate crisis: Experts

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/extreme-weather-events-in-kerala-linked-to-climate-crisis-experts-101634668375094.html

"The havoc wrought by heavy rain in Kerala last week in which 39 people were killed has a clear imprint of climate change, say weather scientists. In the last three years, the state has seen at least four flash floods of which the 2018 floods were the worst. Scientists link the fast-changing weather pattern to the rise in surface temperature of the Arabian Sea in the last two decades, leading to higher cyclonic circulations. According to the India Meteorology Department, there was a 52% increase in cyclonic movement over the Arabian Sea between 2001 and 2019, and an 8% decrease in the Bay of Bengal during the same period. IMD statistics showed that nine cyclonic or major depressions had formed in 2020, of which four were over the Arabian Sea. Roxy Mathew, a planet scientist with the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, said the temperature over the Arabian Sea has increased by 1.2 to 1.4 degrees Celsius in the last two decades. "Usually, the temperature in the Arabian Sea is 1.5 degrees lower than the Bay of Bengal and this is one of the reasons for less cyclonic circulations and low pressure in the Arabian Sea.

But of late, the situation is changing. What is disturbing is that warming is seen not only in the top layers of the sea but also in the deeper layers of the ocean," Mathew said. He added, "We all know that more than 90% of the heat on earth is absorbed by oceans. Usually, temperatures in the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal are above 28 degrees Celsius and in the Arabian Sea, it is between 26 and 28 degrees Celsius. But the Arabian Sea is warming up fast. It has been quite visible in the last decade or so." Dr Dr V S Vijayan, a member of the Madhav Gadgil

committee on Western Ghats and founding director of Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology, said the state was yet to learn its lessons from the 2018 tragedy in which close to 400 people died. “It is sad that in Kerala, discussions start only after a tragedy, but everyone forgets about it soon. Cloud bursts, flash floods and landslips are here to stay. The state will have to pay a heavy price if it goes ahead ignoring the climate change signals,” said Dr M G Manoj of the Advanced Centre for Atmospheric Radar Research with the Cochin University of Science and Technology.

Vijayan said Kerala can take the lead in implementing the UN General Assembly resolution of 2017 on sustainable development. “Our overdependence on natural resources will be reduced and we can think of a better tomorrow. Whether you take Uttarakhand, Kerala or the Northeast, calamities are leaving untold miseries. But for this, we need a committed political leadership,” he said. The UNGA resolution is a set of suggestions to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030. Noted ecological scientist Madhav Gadgil, who headed an expert group to study the degradation of the Western Ghats, said people will have to take more proactive roles to protect their place of living, surroundings, and environment. “I agree that lopsided developmental activities have aggravated the intensity of natural disasters. But I still have hope from Kerala — it is the first to take up decentralised planning. Let people take up their bread-and-butter issues along with sustenance,” Gadgil said, adding that states like Maharashtra and Goa also experience similar tragedies year after year but Kerala gets wider publicity and reach.

Mathew said a big shift in the rain pattern in Kerala is visible.Though monsoon rainfall may decrease, the number of heavy rainfalls will increase, leading to more flash floods and landslides,” Mathew said, adding that Kerala should have been very careful in land use because the state, endowed with many hills and rivers, has a slanting geographical landscape. Apart from global warming, scientists have also found that the dumping of plastic waste in the sea has also led to a rise in surface temperature. According to a study conducted by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute of India in 2018, major oceans will have more plastic than fish by 2050. By then, over 850 metric tonnes of plastic will be found in the sea whereas fish will be 821 metric tonnes. Another study conducted in 2017 by a world body, Alfred Wegener Institute, says the seas near Mumbai, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar Islands are among the most polluted in the world.

Kerala: Search still on for Ponnani fishermen gone missing four days ago

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/search-still-ponnani-fishermen-gone-missing-four-days-ago-156604

"Only Hamsakutty has been found. Four days ago, four fishermen including Hamsakutty had sailed into the sea from Ponnani of Kerala’s Malappuram. In the wee hours of the next morning - half past two at dawn - the boat capsized and the fishermen went missing. Only

Hamsakutty got rescued. Demanding that the search for their missing co-workers be intensified, a number of fishermen blocked the national highway in Ponnani on Sunday, sitting down on the roads amid heavy rain. The protest lasted for several minutes after which the police came to talk peace with them. Fisheries Department Deputy Director Chithra M said in a release that the search has been going on for the missing fishermen in the last three days. The search is happening under the guidance of the fisheries department and the Coast Guard. Fisheries and coastal police boats have been deployed for the search. The Kochi naval base has also helped, said the release.

The four men from Ponnani had gone for fishing on October 13 in a fibre boat. By 2.30 am on October 14, the boat capsized around 10 nautical miles west of Mandalamkunnu. The same day, Hamsakutty was found by fishermen who went to the sea from Beypore in Kozhikode. They informed the fisheries control room that Hamsakutty was safe, after which he was rescued and brought to shore. By 6.30 pm on October 14, a coast guard ship was also deployed for the search. The next day, a helicopter of the coast guard also joined the search team. However, due to bad weather conditions on October 16 – when heavy rains lashed the state -- the search operation could only take place early in the morning, said the government press release. The search was resumed on the morning of October 17.

Kerala: Loss of fishing days a major concern for coastal community

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/loss-of-fishing-days-a-major-concern-for-coastal-community/article37081485.ece

"The continuous loss of fishing days has turned out to be a great threat to the economic welfare of fishers, especially along the coastal segment between Fort Kochi and Alappuzha, which faces the wrath of rough sea conditions, including heavy winds and rain, along the coast. “There are more than 200 traditional small boats that usually operate out of the Chellanam fishing harbour on a daily basis. But it is now more than a fortnight since they ventured out because of the weather conditions,” said P.A. Charles, formerly a fisherman but now working as an autorickshaw driver to make both ends meet. He said that a few of the traditional small boats that ventured out for short fishing trips were fined by the authorities and since then no small boats had set out even for brief periods. M. Majeed of All India Deep Sea Fishers’ Association said that the operations at the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour, one of the busiest fisheries landing centre in the State, had been hit and around 700 longline and gillnet boats remained stranded in the harbour because of the weather conditions.

Though the situation is calm in the deep sea, there were issues close to the shore, where the sea was rough, not allowing either the launch of operations or the safe return of boats from the deep sea, he said. The virtual freezing of fishing operations has landed thousands of fishers in serious trouble. Seven people man longliners and deep sea fishing boats on an average. Nearly 5,000

people have been rendered jobless because of the weather conditions. There are hundreds of others who depend on fish landing operations that include transportation, cleaning and ice making. He said that the COVID-19 restrictions and bad weather conditions had resulted in serious loss of fishing days even as there was a steep fall in the traditional catch of shrimps and other fishes during the season.

Kerala: Rains, Climate Change

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/columns/i-mean-what-i-say/rains-climate-change-and-kerala-shashi-tharoor-column-1.6094654

"As I write these words, heavy rains are again lashing Kerala, as they did in 2018 and 2019, causing colossal damage and loss of life. Though vivid footage of swirling floodwaters is once again dominating our television screens and mobile phones, one hopes the damage will not be as severe as on the previous two occasions. Still, it is time we confronted an inescapable reality: the Indian Ocean region, which hosts two-thirds of the world's population, is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and extreme weather conditions. Kerala – and many other parts of peninsular India – may have to live with much more flooding in the years immediately ahead. While rising sea levels and coastal inundations have increased in magnitude, frequency and intensity, increased rains – in quantities the earth is unable to absorb -- are another well-known reflection of the climate crisis. It is no consolation that what is happening in the Indian Ocean is also responsible for severe events in other parts of the world. For instance, recent flooding and landslides in East Africa and bushfires in Australia have been linked to higher-than-usual temperature differences between the two sides of the Indian Ocean – a phenomenon called the Indian Ocean Dipole.

Dipoles are likely to get worse with increased greenhouse gas emissions. In a 2014 study published in the prestigious scientific journal Nature, scientists in Australia, India, China and Japan modelled the effects of CO2 on extreme Indian Ocean dipoles, such as those in 1961, 1994 and 1997, and found that if emissions were to go up further, the frequency of extreme dipole events would increase from one in 17.3 years to one in 6.3 years. The Kerala floods of 2018 were described as the worst in a century; but floods almost as bad occurred the very next year, and a new round seems to have begun two years later. Is this going to be an annually recurring tragedy? If it is, it threatens a region of colossal importance to the rest of the world. The Indian Ocean itself comprises 20% of the world's oceans but also accounts for 40% of the global coastline, amounting to 66,526 kilometres, connecting 36 countries and a full two-thirds of the world's population. It is absolutely key to the global energy trade, being responsible for 40% of the energy supply between the Gulf, Europe, and Asia. According to the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, more than 80% of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through Indian Ocean chokepoints, with 40% passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35% through the

Strait of Malacca, and 8% through the Bab el-Mandab Strait. For India, 70% of its oil is imported through the Indian Ocean Region to its various ports and in China's case, 84% of its energy imports pass through the Indian Ocean. Over 32.2 million barrels of crude oil is transported through the ocean daily and nearly 70% of offshore oil deposits are located in this region. Things are even graver from India's national perspective.

The Indian Ocean accounts for over 95% of India's trade by volume and 68% of its trade by value. India is the fourth-largest importer of LNG, of which 45% comes through the Indian Ocean. India's fisheries and aquaculture are also significantly dependent on the Indian Ocean. Our maritime exports have grown 55 times (in volume) between 1962 and 2012 and fisheries exports are valued at over US$ 2.5 billion. It is clearly no exaggeration to say that the Indian Ocean is absolutely crucial for the Indian economy, and this has only become clearer with time. Regional integration has also become increasingly important. There has been steady growth in intra- Indian Ocean exports (in other words, exports from one country in the region to another) -- from US$ 391,098 million in 2005, to US$ 1 billion in 2014, accounting for 30% of the region's total exports to the world. The United Arab Emirates, the biggest trader in the region in 2014, directed almost 50% of its exports to other Indian Ocean countries, followed by Singapore, India, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. Despite this, the World Bank has called the Indian Ocean Region one of the worlds' least integrated regions. Integration boosts trade and the movement of people, and is crucial to the promotion of economic prosperity. The devastation of climate change will undermine regional integration as well, threatening the well-being of Indians and others for decades to come.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a casual observer of any one of the myriad trading ports of the Western Indian Ocean could have said these were the "green shoots" of increasing integration and growing inter-connected prosperity. However, with the arrival of the "Oil Age," capitalism, and new nation-state institutions in the last century, Indian Ocean trading communities have seen a complete transformation in the ways in which they engage with each other. Their once vibrant communal interaction across the seas has been replaced by displacement and even the loss of historic connections. Today, as global capitalism and reactionary nationalist impulses engage in a war to win the hearts and minds of nation-consumers, what does this mean for trans-national communities (especially those that predate the nation-states in which they live)? Where do they fit in? And will climate change undermine even what currently exists, forcing countries and communities to retreat into self-protection and focus principally on their own survival? Just as globalisation today appears to be in a crisis driven by the increasing divide between the haves and have-nots, those who profited from the benefits of globalisation and those who have been left behind, historically cultural exchanges in the Indian Ocean region also suffered when conquest and the expansion of colonial empires, in an attempt to establish a hegemony over trade routes, replaced the previous – and largely

peaceful – method of commercial and cultural interactions.

Today, new threats affect the Indian Ocean region and communities within this area in two main ways: first, through geopolitical competition for sea lanes, resources, and maritime dominance in the region; second, through the increasingly visible effects of climate change, which contribute to freak events, natural calamities with increased frequency and magnitude. For hundreds of years the Indian Ocean has been the site of naval battles, movements of migration, and commercial trade, a place of great cultural interaction and military conflict as well as of the moving syncretism of the exchanges of culture and belief. As the rains flood the hills, plains and rivers of Kerala today, it is vital to realise there is something even bigger at stake. The vast expanse of ocean within which we are located must be safeguarded – not just from military aggression but even more from environmental degradation that threatens us all.

Kerala: Fibre boat capsizes in Malappuram, fishermen go missing

https://keralakaumudi.com/en/news/news.php?id=662264&u=fibre-boat-capsizes-in-malappuram-fishermen-go-missing-662264

"Beeran, Ibrahim and Muhammadali from Ponnani went missing. The people in another boat rescued Hamsakutty, who fell along with them. The others is underway. The boat is owned by Beeran, who went missing in the accident. The boat that went fishing yesterday was involved in an accident. The news regarding this came out today. Hamsakutty, who tried to swim away when the boat capsized, was rescued by people on another fishing boat. He was brought ashore at around 3 pm. Rescue operations by the Coast Guard and fishermen are in progress.

Kerala: KSCADC reaches out to households in Kollam district with value-added fish products

http://www.uniindia.com/kscadc-reaches-out-to-households-in-kollam-district-with-value-added-fish-products/south/news/2531693.html

"Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation Limited (KSCADC) is reaching out to households in select places in Kollam district with a wide variety of value-added fish products through its MIMI mobile app. KSADC's fish pickles, fried fish, chammanthi powder, fish curries and dried fish will reach the doorsteps of families in 29 places across Kollam district, including the area under the Municipal Corporation, a release said here on Tuesday. The products include prawn (chemmen), squid (koonthal), tuna (choora), clam (kakka) and mussel (kallummekkaya). Using fish, KSADC is also selling cutlets, samosa, burger, patties, roll, lollipop and soup besides neymeen curry (out of mackerel). The dried fish are of indigenous fishes such as kozhuva, kilimeen, chemmen, sheelavu, uluva,vaala, sravu, kora, parava, matthi, ayala and koonthal. The fish, totally free from adulterating materials, will be

served at doorstep as half-kg packets.

Online orders can be made at https://play.google.com/store/apps/details after installing the MIMI app over mobile phone. Off-line purchases start only after MIMI stores go full-fledged in operations. Till then, the supply of fish ordered, using the app, will be through the temporary distribution centres. MIMI Fish, which was launched on August 29, made its first round of extension in early September, as KSADC opened outlets in 29 places of Kollam district. The fish sold through MIMI strictly follows the hygienic standards and protocols set by European Union and other advanced countries in processing, preservation and storage. The fish, captured by traditional fisher folk or collected from trustworthy farms, is chilled immediately using the technology developed by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology that matches European export standards.

Kerala and Lakshadweep Islands: Kerala on orange alert; fishing prohibited in the coast

https://krishijagran.com/news/kerala-on-orange-alert-fishing-prohibited-in-kerala-and-lakshadweep-coast/

"Warning issued to Fishermen not to venture into coasts of Kerala and Lakshadweep as Heavy rainfall is likely to lash in Kerala for the next five days. Under the influence of cyclonic circulation formed in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) instructed a five days caution to the fishermen, as chances are there for thick winds and rough sea. IMD and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) have warned people in the coastal areas to be vigilant. The state has been on orange alert from 11th October to 13th October and IMD alerted chances of very heavy rainfall up to 20 cm in several districts of the state. Farmers Fear Rain Hit Harvest As a deluge of rain fell to the state in the past few days and the flow of water increased from the eastern side, several areas of Kuttanad in Alleppey have sunken and paddy fields have been inundated. Floodwaters entered to Alappuzha- Changanassery road, destroyed paddy in fields and they are afraid of causing crop loss. Due to incessant rain, the farmers have to halt preparation for fields for the 'puncha' season. The rise in the water level of rivers also bothers the farmers as they fear it would hit the harvest.

Districts on Alerts The orange alert issued to southern districts on Wednesday has lifted, but the rain continues to fall heavily without a change in the atmosphere. There is a flood-like situation in the central parts of Kerala and an orange alert prevails in the Northern districts. The districts which are advised to be vigilant are Idukki, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkadu, and Northern regions such as Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasargod. IMD declared yellow alerts to Kottayam and Idukki, whereas southern parts Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, and Pathanamthitta are in Green alert. Except for the low pressure formed over the

Arabian Sea, Kerala is likely to witness Northeast monsoon, called 'Thulavarsham' soon.

Kerala: Fishers reiterate demand to recover debris of sunken boats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-reiterate-demand-to-recover-debris-of-sunken-boats/article36923063.ece

"Fishers have reiterated their demand for help to remove the debris of sunken boats off the coast of Kochi, where six fishing boats have sunk during the course of a month. The most recent incident involved Kutty Aandavan, a gillnet boat from Nagapattinam, which ventured out from the Kochi harbour on October 30. Fishers on board were saved by those in the vicinity of the site, north-west of the LNG terminal on Puthuvype island. Efforts are on to bring ashore the remains of another boat Ashiqmon that sank off the Kochi coast on August 31. The trawling boat has been hauled and brought close to the channel where passenger boats operate, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, an independent fishers' union. St. Antony, an inboard engine traditional boat, sank in the vicinity of the above accidents on September 1, but the vessel is yet to be retrieved.

The boat sank after it ran into the remains of another boat that had sunk on May 27, said Mr. George, citing the cause of a series of accidents in the same fishing channel. Meanwhile, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, responding to a submission by K.N. Unnikrishnan, promised immediate action to remove the debris of sunken boats. Mr. Unnikrishnan had underlined the need for a permanent arrangement for removing the debris of sunken boats to prevent accidents. The Minister said the Fisheries Department, district administration, Cochin Port Trust, Kerala Maritime Board, Hydrographic Survey Department, and the Disaster Management Authority would be involved in drawing up a plan of action address the matter.

Kerala: Govt slammed over coastal management plan

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/govt-slammed-over-coastal-mgmt-plan/articleshow/86975629.cms

"The opposition nailed the state government's claims regarding the delay in preparing and finalizing the coastal management plan, and slammed the government for causing the delay, leading to thousands of families losing the benefits of the relaxations offered in the latest CRZ notification by the Centre, in the assembly on Tuesday. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan

said that the preparation of coastal management plan relating to the notification by the Centre in 2019 has been delayed because of Covid-19 pandemic as it involves extensive procedures, including conducting public hearings in each district which has a coastal area. He also blamed the previous UDF government for not doing anything regarding the previous notification in 2011. Opposition leader V D Satheesan said that the first notification regarding the coastal regulation management was issued by the Centre in 1991. The notification was revised in 2011, and there were several complaints from all the states, including from Kerala, even regarding the revised notification. It was on the basis of such complaints that the Shailesh Nayak committee visited the state in 2014. The Centre then issued revised notification in 2019 by incorporating several relaxations on the basis of the concerns raised by the states. The Centre, while issuing a revised notification in early 2019, also said that a coastal management plan has to be put in place within six months of issuing the notification, for giving relaxations on the basis of the notification, Satheesan said.

But the state government did not complete it not only in six months, but almost two years have been completed since the notification has been issued by the state, he said. “While the state is citing the pandemic for the delay, states like Maharashtra have already submitted the plan to the Centre. Because of this delay, the state is unable to reap the benefits of several relaxations offered in the latest notification,” Satheesan added. These include permission to undertake construction beyond 50 metres from the coastline and permission for undertaking constructions beyond 20m from the coastline in the case of small islands. He said that in the case of the state, salt water is advancing towards the land region in all the rivers flowing towards the west, and the CRZ rules will become applicable till the last point of the high-tide area. “The delay on the part of the government would lead to two-thirds of the state coming under CRZ rules,” Satheesan said. Meanwhile, the chief minister said though the Centre issued the notification on January 18, 2019, the state received the guidelines only in June. A panel led by additional chief secretary (environment) and consisting of experts, including P Z Thomas and P B Sahasranamam, are rectifying the shortcomings in the pre-draft plan prepared by the national centre for the earth science studies (NCESS). After this, public hearings will be conducted in 10 coastal districts, and the suggestions will be compiled and included in the draft plan to be submitted to the technical committee of the Centre. The final plan will be submitted to the Centre by including the recommendations of the technical committee, the CM said. The opposition later staged a walkout, protesting the delay in putting up the plan and the refusal by speaker M B Rajesh in allowing the adjournment motion in this regard.

Kerala: Accident-prone harbours to have rescue forces

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/accident-prone-harbours-to-have-rescue-forces/article36870261.ece

"Trained rescue forces will be deployed in accident-prone harbours in the State, with Muthalappozhi, Kasaragod, and Vizhinjam on the top of the priority list, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian told the Assembly on Wednesday. Replying to questions regarding frequent boat accidents leading to loss of lives of fishworkers at Muthalappozhi in Thiruvananthapuram district, Mr. Cherian said that unscientific construction of the harbour had led to accidents. On the stretch of coast from Anchuthengu to Veli, 58 fishworkers have died in accidents since 2011. As per the FIRs filed in coastal police stations, 11 fishworkers have died at the Muthalappozhi harbour in the five-year period from 2016, out of which two deaths happened this year. Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan and M. Vincent, MLA, said the promise of dredging, made in the Assembly previously, had been delayed. Sand deposit, a reason Mr. Cherian said accidents had increased due to the depositing of sand at the harbour mouth. An understanding has been arrived at with the Adani Group for dredging at Muthalappozhi. A grab dredger has been brought to the site.

Kerala: Juvenile fishing causing unease among traditional fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/juvenile-fishing-causing-unease-among-traditional-fishers/article36868828.ece

"Juvenile fishing, mostly for fishmeal factories, off the coast of Kerala continues to cause unease in the fishing community, and the newly constituted fishers' forum, Matsya Thozhilali Samyukta Samiti, has called for a protest action on October 11. Though the State government had notified the minimum legal size (MLS) for 14 commercially important fish species in July 2015, traditional fishers and most boat owners have complained of some trawlers resorting to destructive practices, including pair or bull trawling. Pair trawling involves using two boats to pull a massive net that trawls through the entire depth of the sea, catching juveniles as well and causing immense damage to the sea floor. While Fisheries Department sources said it had been taking stringent action against destructive practices, including juvenile fishing and destructive trawling practices, they called for creating awareness among fishers.

Jackson Pollayil of the Samyukta Samiti and leader of the Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, an independent union of fishers, said the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association had also opposed destructive practices, and that only a small number of trawlers violated rules. He added that juveniles were caught for fishmeal factories and caused immense damage to the marine fish stock. He alleged that the Fisheries Department had failed to initiate action against trawlers engaged in destructive practices and called for more vigil on its part. He also said traditional fishers had taken to preventing juvenile fishing and pair trawling off the coasts of Kollam and Alappuzha. Mr. Jackson said three trawlers were seized by fishers off Alappuzha and two off the coast of Beypore and handed over to the Fisheries Department recently. A department official said more boats had been seized for violation of MLS rules in

September compared to previous months. The official added that five boats had been fined last month off the Thiruvananthapuram coast. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) had recommended MLS for 58 commercially important species on the basis of which the MLS for 14 species had been notified. The CMFRI had said that juveniles were being caught for fishmeal factories, and that exploitation of juvenile fish resulted in economic loss. Juvenile fishing threatens long-term sustainability, and MLS is used as a tool for resource preservation.

Kerala: Fisheries department seeks steps to clear boat wreckage in Ernakulam

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kerala-fisheries-department-seeks-steps-to-clear-boat-wreckage-in-ernakulam/articleshow/86773938.cms

"Fisheries department has approached the district administration seeking steps to salvage the wreckage of the fishing boat, Poornasree, which met with an accident four months ago. The department has sent a letter in this regard to district collector Jafar Malik. The collector is likely to give directives to the Cochin Port under the Disaster Management Act. The department has requested the collector to give directives to the Port to salvage the wreckage using their machineries. The fisheries department decided to approach the district administration after the Cochin Port refused to remove the wreckage, which led to many accidents in the area. The department made it clear that they don't have the expertise or facility to remove the wreckage. "Despite sending letters to the Port and the boat owner, requesting them to salvage the wreckage, no step was taken by both the parties.

The debris will cause more accidents in the area and will hamper the movement of fishing boats. Hence it is imperative to salvage the wreckage," reads the letter sent to the collector. Meanwhile, Cochin Port authorities said that it is the responsibility of the boat owner to clear the debris. "If he fails to do so, the Port will do it and claim the expense from him. But it will be done as a last resort, under the Indian Ports Act," said a source in the Cochin Port Trust (CPT). CPT currently sues fisheries department in a similar case where the Port salvaged the wreckage of a fishing boat earlier. Meanwhile, Tamil Nadu fisheries department officials reached Kochi to salvage a fishing boat, registered in their state, which got stuck in the sand dune. But the fishing net, weighing tonnes, got stuck under the water making it difficult to lift.

Kerala: Fishing boat capsizes in Kochi; all 11 fishermen rescued

https://newsonair.com/2021/10/01/kerala-fishing-boat-capsizes-in-kochi-all-11-fishermen-rescued/

"In Kerala, a fishing boat 'Kutty Andavan' partially capsized after it hit sand dunes near the LNG Terminal at the harbour mouth in Kochi this morning. State Fisheries Department

sources said, all the 11 fishermen in the boat were rescued.

Kerala: Fishing boat operators rue sharp fall in prices of seasonal harvest

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishing-boat-operators-rue-sharp-fall-in-prices-of-seasonal-harvest/article36753273.ece

"Rising diesel price and low cost of seasonal harvests like shrimp, cuttle fish, and squid have hit boat operators in a big way, with some of them describing the market situation as desperate. Adding to the slackening demand for local catch is the arrival of fish from the neighbouring Goa and Tamil Nadu, said a boat owner on Thursday. The price of seasonal wild catch like shrimp has dropped around 80%, said Paul Rajan, a boat owner from Kalamukku. The average market expectation is that a kilogram of shrimp will fetch Rs.80 to Rs.100. However, the price is so low that a few boat owners are even forced to throw away the catch even as the best quality sells at around Rs.60 a kg. The average price has ranged between Rs.20 and Rs.25 a kg, he added. One of the reasons being cited for the low price is the stalling of shrimp peeling operations owing to shortage of workers. Mr. Rajan sought the intervention of government agencies to help the struggling boat owners. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of Kerala Boat Owners' Association said the prices of shrimp, squid, and cuttle fish had fallen sharply this season, plunging boat owners and fish workers into serious financial trouble.

He added that cuttle fish price had fallen to around Rs.250 a kg from the earlier Rs.350 a kg, while the price of squid was now less than Rs.400 a kg as against the earlier level of Rs.500 a kg. Even the price of locally grown shrimp variety has fallen to around Rs.300 and Rs.325 from the earlier level of Rs.450 a kg. The rising price of diesel, now hovering around Rs.94 a litre, is one of the reasons why boat owners are unable to cope with the market situation, Mr. Kalapurackal said. Each fishing expedition requires at least 400 litres a day, making the input cost quite high. Besides, boat owners have to pay Rs.26,500 for permits for boats which are more than 20 metres long. It is estimated that there are around 3,600 boats operating off the cost of Kerala, with Kochi and Munambam accounting for around 600 boats, he added.

Kerala: Sardine becomes as expensive as seer fish; price touches Rs 200-300

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/sardine-becomes-as-expensive-as-seer-fish-price-touches-rs-200-300-fish-price-sardines-scarce-and-high-priced-kerala-1.6048854

"Though it is the time of a good catch, Keralites' favourite fish sardines are nowhere to be seen. Due to the rise in demand, the price of sardines has skyrocketed. As seer fish is available aplenty, its price dropped and now the cost of both the fish is almost the same. The sardines that are sold in Kasaragod are mainly brought from Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The fisherfolk said that it has been around two years since they caught sardines near the Kerala coast. Sardines now fetch between Rs 200 and Rs 300 per kilogram while the large seer fish are

sold for Rs 380 - Rs 400. The cost of small mackerels have dropped considerably and touched Rs 250 - Rs 300, which is almost the same price of sardines.

Despite being the season of a good catch, it is not a good time for the fishermen. Neeleshwaram native Suresh Babu, a fisherman, claimed that the fish population has depleted drastically. The pearl spot (Karimeen) and prawns once abundantly caught have also decreased now, said Suresh. What happened to sardines? Dr A Bijukumar, head of the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries in Kerala University, pointed out three reasons for the absence of sardines near the Kerala coast and the most important among them is climate change. As the sardines swim near the water surface, they migrate to cooler places when the temperature exceeds a certain limit. Now the sardine population is moving to the northern region including the coasts of Gujarat and Goa. When the temperature rises in the Indian ocean, the oxygen level in the water decreases and it also dwindles the reproduction rate of them.

Kerala: Italian marines: SC grants 3 weeks to vessel owner to reply to plea of fishermen for compensation

https://www.wionews.com/india-news/italian-marines-indias-supreme-court-grants-3-weeks-to-vessel-owner-to-reply-to-plea-of-fishermen-for-compensation-416458

"The Supreme Court Monday granted three weeks time to the owner of the fishing vessel to respond to a plea of some Kerala fishermen seeking shares from Rs two crore compensation, to be paid to him for the 2012 incident in which his boat 'St Antony' was fired at by the Italian marines killing two fishermen. A bench comprising Justices Indira Banerjee and JK Maheshwari took note of the submission of lawyer A Karthik, appearing for the boat owner Freddy, that he be granted some time to respond to the plea of the surviving fishermen who wanted shares from his portion of Rs 2 crore (20 million rupees) compensation yet to be disbursed.

""Three weeks time has been granted to file the counter affidavit (reply). One week thereafter (granted) for filing rejoinder. List after six weeks,"" the bench said, adding that the state government can also file its response to the plea. Earlier, the apex court had directed the Kerala High Court not to disburse any amount from Rs 2 crore (20 million rupees) earmarked for the owner of the fishing vessel. The plea filed by seven, out of ten surviving fishermen who were also on the boat, said that they too were eligible for the compensation from Rs 2 crore (20 million rupees) earmarked by the apex court for the boat owner. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had suggested that the fishermen's plea can be sent to the Kerala High Court which is entrusted with the task of disbursing the compensation, to which the bench had said a notice to vessel owner Freddy was necessary as any modification in the order will reduce his share.

""The notice of this application be given to the boat owner and in the meanwhile, we request

the Kerala High Court not to disburse any amount to the boat owner in terms of the June 15, 2021 order,"" the bench had said in its order. Freddy, for whom Rs two crore out of total Rs 10 crore compensation has been earmarked, was also paid Rs 17 lakh (1.7 million rupees) ex-gratia earlier for the damage to the vessel which was worth Rs 10 lakh only, the counsel for the fishermen had said. Urging the top court to modify its June 15 order by providing some compensation to the surviving fishermen, the lawyer had said that one of the four grounds for seeking damages in the case was injuries, including mental, which were also sustained by his clients. ""Kerala government has now said no compensation will be given to us on account of the latest order of the Supreme Court and we just want that the Rs 2 crore compensation, payable to the boat owner, be stayed,"" he had said.

The bench had said Freddy should be made party instead of the Centre as only he can oppose this plea. On June 15, the top court had brought the curtains down on the 9-year old pending criminal proceedings in India against two Italian marines, Massimilano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, who were accused of killing the two fishermen, after Rs 10 crore in compensation was paid by Italy to the heirs of the deceased and the boat owner. It had directed Rs 4 crore each be given to the dependents of two deceased fishermen and the rest Rs 2 crore would be given to the vessel owner. The top court had referred the matter to the Kerala High Court to oversee the disbursement. In the fresh plea, the fishermen said they were also injured in the incident and hence, entitled to compensation. They have sought a stay on the disbursement till their claims are determined. The top court had also said earlier that as per the international arbitral award accepted by India, Italy shall resume further investigation in the case against the two marines and quashed the FIR, registered at Coastal Police Station of Neendakara, Kollam in Kerala and re-registered by NIA in 2013, and all the proceedings in the case. It had closed the case after the Arbitral Tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS delivered its award on May 21, 2020, under which Italy agreed to pay Rs 10 crore compensation, over the ex-gratia amount already paid."We also further direct that the amount of Rs 10 crore (100 million rupees) now lying with the Registry of this Court be transferred to the High Court of Kerala, out of which Rs 4 crore be paid to the heirs of each deceased and Rs 2 crores (2 million rupees) be paid to the owner of the boat - St. Antony,"" the bench had said. It had requested the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court to nominate a Judge to pass appropriate order of disbursement/investment of the amount to the heirs and ensure the compensation is duly received by them and not diverted/ misappropriated.

""The remaining amount of Rs two crore be paid to the owner of the boat - St. Antony by an account payee cheque,"" the bench had said. The top court noted that Kerala, the heirs of the deceased fishermen and the owner of the boat have agreed to accept the award. In February 2012, India had accused the two marines on board the MV Enrica Lexie -- an Italian flagged oil tanker -- of killing two Indian fishermen who were on a fishing vessel in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Latorre, who had suffered a brain stroke on August 31, 2014, was first

granted bail and allowed by the apex court on September 12, 2014, to go to Italy for four months and after that, extensions have been granted to him. In Italy, Latorre underwent heart surgery after which the top court granted him an extension of his stay in his native country. The complaint against the marines was lodged by Freddy on whose vessel two Kerala fishermen were killed when marines opened fire on them under the misconception that they were pirates.

Kerala: Houses damaged, trees uprooted in heavy rain

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/houses-damaged-trees-uprooted-in-heavy-rain/articleshow/86565205.cms

"Heavy rain and strong winds that lashed the district on Sunday and Monday caused considerable damages in the district. Revenue officials have informed that one house was completely destroyed, while four others suffered partial damages. According to district administration officials, a house under the Neyyattinkara taluk was completely destroyed in the rain. Another house in the same taluk suffered partial damages after a tree fell over it. Two houses under Varkala taluk too suffered partial damages. Tree falls were widely reported across the district. In the city limits alone, nine such cases were reported at Karamana, Pattom, LMS Junction, Vazhayila, Pangode Military Camp, NCC Nagar at Peroorkada, Kunnukuzhy and Government Ayurveda College. The fire and rescue services personnel worked continuously to remove tree branches and logs from the roads.

At NCC Nagar, a house suffered minor damages after a tree fell over it. At Ayurveda College, a vehicle owner suffered serious losses after a tree fell on his luxury car, which was parked in the parking lot of the hospital. There were numerous cases of tree falls reported outside the city too. Luckily, no casualties were reported. The revenue officials also said that they have launched inquiries after a section of fishermen from Valiyathura fishing hamlet complained that their fishing boats docked on the beach were swept away by strong waves. As the water level rose, shutters of Aruvikkara reservoir were raised to 100cm by Monday evening. The district collector announced that the shutters of Peppara reservoir would also be raised to 20cm by 6am on Tuesday.

Kerala:Vannamei holds hope for aquaculturists

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/vannamei-holds-hope-for-aquaculturists/article36667257.ece

"Supported by a sustained demand in overseas markets, vannamei, the exotic white-leg shrimp, is slowly becoming a game changer for aquaculturists in the State. In 2020-21, India exported 5.9 lakh tonnes of frozen shrimp worth Rs.32,520 crore and States such as Andhra Pradesh have been extensively farming the variety. While many States switched from tiger shrimp to vannamei over the years due to high productivity and profit margin, Kerala is yet to

tap the potential of vannamei culture. The Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala (ADAK) recently carried out a demonstration farming at its farm at Ayiramthengu, harvesting more than two tonnes of shrimp from half an acre. “This means that we can produce around 10 tonnes of vannamei from a one-hectare farm. When we take the national average, productivity of vannamei is five tonne per hectare and even that ensures a profitable farming system,” says Dinesan Cheruvat, Executive Director, ADAK. Compared to fish varieties such as tilapia and pangusis that yield around 10 tonnes per hectare, the market value of vannamei is much higher. While a kg of vannamei, an export-oriented variety, can fetch anything from Rs.300 to 400, pangusis is sold at Rs.100. Kerala, with many seafood processing units, usually wait for vannamei consignments from other States. According to experts, shrimp farming in Kerala has come down considerably from 13,000 ha to 2,000 ha in the past 20 years.

Though many aquaculture programmes had been implemented by the government, few focussed on enhancing shrimp production or adopting the practices opted by the leading States. According to aquaculturists, a string of vannamei farms have come up across the State in recent times but the farmers are struggling to develop a strong marketing network. “Vannamei culture is slowly becoming popular in districts such as Kannur. The specific pathogen-free (SPF) variety has comparatively higher survival rate and it’s an advantage,” says T.Prushothaman, State president, Kerala Aqua Farmers Federation. While the indigenous naaran (white shrimp) and tiger varieties are not ideal for intensive farming, the stocking density and yield of vannamei is much higher. “But right now the biggest challenge faced by farmers in Kerala is the inflow of product from other States. When we implement a project, everything from production to sales should be taken care of. There is no point in enhancing production if there is no provision for marketing,” says Mr.Prushothaman.

Kerala: Concern over flight of fishing boats unfounded, say boat owners

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/concern-over-flight-of-fishing-boats-unfounded-say-boat-owners/article36607792.ece

"Concern over the possible flight of fishing boats from the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour, mostly manned by fishers from Tamil Nadu from centres like Thengapattanam, Thuthoor, Nagapattanam and Rameshwaram, is unfounded, say All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of the Association said that the there had been a temporary disruption in operations as many of the fishers from Tamil Nadu gone back to their homes to celebrate occasions like August 15, which is considered a major holiday for the fishers from the coastal area. He also said that the Tamil Nadu government offered substantial subsidy on diesel price, which had attracted the fishers to harbours like Thengapattanam. However, most of the fishing operations took place off the coast of Kerala and Karnataka, which would continue to attract the fishing boats to Kochi. However, he felt that the

impersonalisation of the harbours like Thengapattanam, about 10 kms away from the Kerala border into Tamil Nadu, could draw fishing boats to that harbour in the long run. M. Majeed of All Indian Deep Sea Fishers' Association also opined that there was no flight of fishing vessels from Kochi. He said COVID-19 restrictions and weather warnings had kept some of the boats away from the Kochi harbour.

This, however was not a permanent feature as the rainy season is ending and fishing operations are expected to get into full swing. There are around 700 longline boats operating out of the Kochi harbour while there are around 120 trawl boats and about 75 purseine boats based at the harbour. Most of these boats are operated by fishers from the neighbouring States. A fishing boat operator based in Kochi said that there was a fall in the number of fishing boats calling at the Kochi harbour but that was a temporary phenomenon and the situation would be normalised soon. But he pointed out that the strict COVID-19 restrictions as well as high labour cost were factors that could dissuade the boats operated by fishers from outside Kerala calling at the harbour.

Kerala: Fisheries sector reeling under severe crisis

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fisheries-sector-reeling-under-severe-crisis/articleshow/86406409.cms

"Though the fisheries sector is said to have opened some time ago after the lockdown was lifted in harbours and landing centres, the stakeholders are yet to get a feel of the vibrant fish market. Fishermen are reeling under severe crisis with lockdown, fuel price hike, weather warnings and poor landings. While traditional boats could go fishing for nearly 130 days this year from January, the larger boats have only started going since August. Unlike in other districts, Kochi has been strictly following the alternate day principle for larger boats to ensure sustainability and a fair catch for all. The Kerala sardines are still missing at the landings. Several fishermen said that they have been getting juveniles in their nets. Officials said that while they could sympathize with the fishing community, they have been booking cases against landings which are below the fixed minimum legal size (MLS). “We know that some of our counterparts are catching and selling it in other states’ harbours.

Much of the catch is going to the fishmeal industry,” said a fisherman.Fuel prices of both diesel and kerosene have also affected the entire sector, especially the traditional sector. The only good news in all these days is that we are getting better prices when compared to earlier days,” said Anthony Kurishinkal, a fisherman at Chellanam. Most boat owners say that they cannot afford 10 to 15-day fishing operations. “We will need at least 3,000 litres of diesel, food and ration for 20 plus workers, wages etc. Even if we set off, we have no guarantee of a good catch. All we are getting is marine shrimps,” said P P Gireesh of trawl net boat operators’ association. “For the last few days, there have been better landings. Many systems have to be put in place

before implementing the auctioning system, which has been affected due to Covid. Right now, high-value fishes for export are being sold at fair prices for fishermen," said fisheries joint director Saju M S. The government should have discussions with them before implementing the auction and management bill, said Charle George, state president of Kerala matsya thozhilali union.

Kerala: Keeping alive a mangrove conservationist's legacy to protect

https://india.mongabay.com/2021/09/keeping-alive-a-mangrove-conservationists-legacy-to-protect-kerala-coast/

"Born into a marginalised family in 1937 in Kerala, his umbilical cord looked almost like a bloated seed of a common mangrove tree. So, his parents who worked as farm labourers named him Pokkudan, which in the local language, refers to infants with such umbilical cords. The man, who was unable to complete elementary school education due to poverty and caste-based discrimination, died on September 27, 2015, leaving behind a rich legacy of protecting 22 species of mangroves from local extinction. Better known as Kallen Pokkudan, the Dalit from Kannur district became a celebrated guardian angel of Kerala's mangrove forests through dedicated interventions over the years. Pokkudan travelled across Kerala's coast telling the local communities, especially fish workers, that only mangroves could protect coastal assets during hazards such as cyclones. On his travels, he collected seeds of 22 species of mangroves.

There were only a few takers in those years for his argument that mangroves are one of the vital long-term solutions to sea erosion and storms, which turn coastal communities into climate refugees. To prove his point, Pokkudan had created mangrove walls at Choodat beach in Kannur and Arattupuzha in Alappuzha and prevented sea erosion-related issues that concerned the respective local fishing communities. Now, climate change and rapid, unscientific development of mega infrastructure projects have crippled everyday life on the 590-km long Kerala coastline; sea-erosion and sea accretion are worsening the situation. Experts have warned that coastal areas in the state will witness an increasing number of sea surges in the coming years, primarily due to rising sea surface temperatures. Experts advocating for nature-based solutions involving the active participation of coastal communities are looking to answers such as those spotlighted by Pokkudan, who consistently argued that erecting granite seawalls would turn counter-productive. Restoring coastal vegetation, mainly mangrove forestation, is the need of the hour, they say. "It was 1989; my father started planting mangroves seedlings along mud-bunds which protect the traditional shrimp fields in the brackish water wetlands of Kannur where wet paddy and fish are cultivated. He was 52 then. Soon he started mounting public opinion against land reclamation, garbage dumps and deforestation that threatened coastal forest ecosystems.

Then based on the traditional knowledge he gained and practical expertise from the local fisher

community, he concluded that mangroves are the best available deterrent against sea erosion," said Anandan Paithalen, elder son of Pokkudan, a schoolteacher by profession. Anandan is now on a unique mission with his five siblings. They revived the defunct Kallen Pokkudan Mangrove Trust in recent months, formed by their father in 2013 to impart mangrove conservation literacy to society. With the help of Kerala government's social forestry and education departments and environmentalists, the trust has started preparing mangrove nurseries in schools, youth clubs, and voluntary organisations in ten coastal districts to generate enough seedlings to plant in areas that witness sea erosion. The Kerala coast would get a mangrove protection wall in another six years as per the ongoing project. "My father had incurred financial debt by devoting himself to promote the mangroves. After his death, the immediate priority of the family was to clear the debts. Now we are reviving the trust using our resources and his legacy through conservation activities," said Anandan Paithalen's sister Pushapalatha.

"They can buffer erosion, enhance bio-biodiversity, prevent high tide incursion, and even reduce the impact of future tsunamis. So, we have high hopes for the initiative started by Pokkudan's family. The appreciative aspect is that they collect the seeds and make them available free of cost at the respective nurseries to local communities. The government departments and environmentalists can only meet expenses of the upbringing at the nursery," said Jaffer Palott, noted environmentalist. According to P Sujanapal, a scientist with Kerala Forest Research Institute, Kerala's mangrove cover has severely disintegrated in the last four decades with their spread declining from 700 sq km to 24 sq km in that period. Of the remaining wetlands, Kannur has 45 percent of the total mangroves, largely thanks to Pokkudan. Now the effort is to increase the mangrove cover manifolds mainly in the coastal region. Like Pokkudan, his children also live in close contact with the wetlands of Kannur and collect, preserve, and plant the seeds, primarily of the "mad mangrove" tree – the long-fruited, stilted mangrove known as Rhizophora mucronata.

They are also promoting some other rare species of mangroves. In total, 22 varieties of mangrove trees welcome you to Pokkudan's village Pazhyanagadi in Kannur district, including Clerodendrum inerme, Premna serratifolia, Acanthus ilicifolius and Derris scandens. The surroundings of Pokkudan's ancestral home have now turned into a massive mangrove nursery. Interestingly, what had led to Pokkudan's passion for mangroves was political disillusionment. Pokkudan had spent a significant share of his life organising and strengthening the labourers' union of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). He started noticing how monsoon storms were drenching little school-going children while they walked to the school through narrow mud paths in his hometown. During heavy monsoon days, the lashing winds would take their umbrellas away. The high-energy storm waves would destroy embankments around the paddy cultivating areas. Over the years, the mangrove wetlands in his hometown had turned into garbage dumps for neighbouring towns. Such a situation had severely affected the ecological

functions of the wetlands; it had impacted their nutrient cycling, flood control function, groundwater recharging, salt dissipation, absorption and dilution of pollutants, and the creation of microclimatic niches that support different forms of life.

The mangroves always remained a rich medicine, food, and fuel source for the marginalised community (Pulayan) Pokkudan belonged to. “The fish, the birds, and the people all depend on the mangroves,” says Anandan. He said his father called the trees “the security guards of the earth” and was convinced that floods in coastal regions would not kill so many if there were mangroves. According to Pokkudan’s younger son Sreejith, collecting the seeds of the mangrove trees is strenuous work. Besides, the swamps where mangroves grow often remain choked with waste. “Our father aimed to construct a mangrove wall in the coast, and we will fulfill it,” said Pushpalatha, one of Pokkudan’s children.In the past, our father had led a one-person movement for mangroves.

Now, his family is in the process of evolving it as a mass movement with the involvement of students, fish workers, and farmers,” she added. “So far, the government has dumped granite boulders mined from the Western Ghats on the coast. The construction of granite boulder walls that began in the 1960s turned into a wasteful process with huge expenditure from the public exchequer. The ideal option is creating a green belt comprising the finest varieties of mangroves in the coastal region. It must be a unique wall that can grow organically and ensure a sustainable livelihood option for coastal communities,” says Anandan. “Numerous mangrove restoration projects were initiated after the 2004 tsunami. Mangroves can rapidly diminish the height of wind and the swell of waves. Even during relatively large storm surges, the leaves and branches of the forest canopy will help reduce wave energy providing the trees are tall enough,” points out coastal zone expert Max Martin. According to aquatic biologist A. Bijukumar, restoring the coastal mangrove ecosystem is a challenging and gradual process that needs to be scientifically robust.

The effort is to plant mangroves in areas where they were not in existence for long, especially the mudflats. In such areas, saplings that can withstand soil erosion and wave action must be preferred. Low oxygen availability due to constant moisture is an issue in mudflats, and that may cause high seedling mortality and stunted growth. So the choice of local good quality seed is important,” he said. “Some mangrove species tolerate greater saltwater flooding than others. They must be preferred. To create a multi-species community we need to combine species that complement one another. Involving the local communities, especially fish workers, in the process is supreme. Local communities know much about successful mangrove management, and their involvement is key to long-term success in restoration, management, and benefit flows,” he said. Inspired by Pokkudan, 55-year-old fish worker T P Murukesan of Vypeen in Kochi started his mangrove nursery and plantation initiative ten years ago to prevent sea

erosion and flooding on the coast.

In collaboration with Pokkudan's family, Murukesan is engaged in plantation drives in coastal villages of Cherai, Njarackal, North Mulavukad, Nayarambalam, Vallarpadam, Mangalavanam, and Chellanam with the forest department. The mangroves he planted grow lush, providing animals and birds with a safe environment. As per the initial plan, seedlings prepared in the nurseries would be taken to the coast for planting by October end coinciding with the opening of educational institutions in Kerala after COVID-19 lockdown. The trust feels that the involvement of school and college students is critical in promoting mangroves. The same kind of activities would be undertaken by the trust every year. "We are also determined about the involvement of the fisher community," says Anandan.

Kerala: Action against illegal fishing: Fisheries dept

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/action-against-illegal-fishing-fisheries-dept/article36601938.ece

"Strict action will be taken against those who engage in illegal practices including bush park fishing, Fisheries Deputy Director has said. The department has launched a crackdown on unscientific and illegal methods by intensifying surveillance and enforcement. The public can contact the department on 0474 2792850 and report such cases.

Kerala: Adani Ports seeks five years extension for completing Vizhinjam port

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/adani-ports-seeks-five-years-extension-for-completing-vizhinjam-port/article36583458.ece

"Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) has sought a five years extension from the Kerala government to complete construction and start operations at the international container transshipment terminal at Vizhinjam near Thiruvananthapuram. According to the concession agreement signed on August 17, 2015, the port was slated to start operations on December 3, 2019 which could be pushed to August 3, 2020. Varied reasons Adani Vizhinjam Port (AVPPL), the APSEZ unit developing the port, has blamed force majeure events such as the cyclone Ockhi in 2017, high waves, a National Green Tribunal order, the pandemic, the cyclone Tauktae in May this year, and reasons attributable to government authorities for overshooting the commercial operations date (COD) set by the concession agreement for the project. Adani Vizhinjam Port has constructed 850 metres of the total breakwater of 3.1 km. Cyclone Tauktae damaged the structure from 676 metre onwards. The force majeure clause absolves firms from meeting their contractual commitments for reasons beyond their control. Arbitration process Adani Vizhinjam Port has initiated arbitration proceedings to resolve the

disputes arising from the delay in completing the project. In its claims submitted before the three-member arbitral tribunal, Adani Vizhinjam Port has sought a time extension till December 2024 to start operations. Also see: Big battle brewing on JNPT container terminal privatisation tender In its counterclaims submitted to the tribunal, the Kerala government has rejected the force majeure reasons cited by Adani Vizhinjam Port for the delay and said that the port developer was in "default", multiple sources said.

The concession agreement allows the port developer a cure period of nine months from the scheduled completion date to rectify the default. Of this, there is no penalty for the first three months. For the balance six months, the Kerala government can levy liquidated damages at the rate of 0.1 per cent of the performance security amount for each day of delay in completing the project. This works out to Rs.12 lakh a day or Rs.3.6 crore per month. The tribunal will determine how much of the claims can be admitted and can set a new timeline for the completion of the project, sources said. Vizhinjam transshipment port In July, APSEZ said it "will continue" with the work on building the Vizhinjam transshipment port, allaying concerns that the project has lost its relevance with the firm announcing plans in March to set up a container handling facility in rival Colombo port.

The Vizhinjam facility is designed to cut India's dependence on Colombo — a regional transshipment hub — to send and receive cargo containers entailing extra time and costs for exporters and importers. Annually, around 3 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) of India-bound cargo containers are transshipped at neighbouring country ports especially Colombo, Singapore and other regional ports, according to official estimates. Port handling charges Colombo, Singapore and Port Klang handle more than 85 per cent of this with Colombo alone handling about 2.5 million TEUs. "Given the extra port handling charges incurred at the transshipment hubs, transshipment of cargo results in logistic cost inefficiencies for Indian industry. The additional port handling cost is to the tune of $80-100 per TEU, which could be saved if the container was imported/exported as direct gateway cargo instead of being transshipped," the Maritime India Vision 2030, a ten-year blueprint for the maritime sector, pointed out. Also see: CCI nod for Adani Ports' 10.4 % stake buy in Gangavaram Port "This offers a substantial opportunity for the development of transshipment ports on the Indian coast. Hence, we believe that our strategic investment in an ultra-modern deep draft Vizhinjam container transshipment terminal at Kerala indicates an excellent business opportunity," APSEZ said in its annual report for 2020-21.

Towards strategic capacity addition, we will continue with the development work at Vizhinjam, APSEZ said. Viability grant The Vizhinjam project is entitled to receive a viability grant funding (VGF) of Rs.1,635 crore to be shared by the Centre (Rs.818 crore) and the Kerala government (Rs.817 crore) to boost its viability, making it the first port project to be offered such a grant. Of this, Rs.1,227 crore will be given during the construction phase and the

balance during the operation period spanning 40 years extendable by another 20 years. The VGF was the basis on which the bid was awarded to APSEZ, which quoted the least grant.

Keeping alive a mangrove conservationist's legacy to protect the coast of the south Indian state of Kerala

https://india.mongabay.com/2021/09/keeping-alive-a-mangrove-conservationists-legacy-to-protect-kerala-coast/

"Born into a marginalised family in 1937 in Kerala, his umbilical cord looked almost like a bloated seed of a common mangrove tree. So, his parents who worked as farm labourers named him Pokkudan, which in the local language, refers to infants with such umbilical cords. The man, who was unable to complete elementary school education due to poverty and caste-based discrimination, died on September 27, 2015, leaving behind a rich legacy of protecting 22 species of mangroves from local extinction. Better known as Kallen Pokkudan, the Dalit from Kannur district became a celebrated guardian angel of Kerala's mangrove forests through dedicated interventions over the years. Pokkudan travelled across Kerala's coast telling the local communities, especially fish workers, that only mangroves could protect coastal assets during hazards such as cyclones. On his travels, he collected seeds of 22 species of mangroves. There were only a few takers in those years for his argument that mangroves are one of the vital long-term solutions to sea erosion and storms, which turn coastal communities into climate refugees. To prove his point, Pokkudan had created mangrove walls at Choodat beach in Kannur and Arattupuzha in Alappuzha and prevented sea erosion-related issues that concerned the respective local fishing communities.

Kerala: Officials draw flak for delaying housing project

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/officials-draw-flak-for-delaying-housing-project/article36536725.ece

"The Kerala State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has come to the rescue of homeless families from the fishing community who have been staying at the Valiyathura UP School for years. The Commission directed the government and the Kerala Coastal Area

Development Corporation to speed up measures for their rehabilitation. The delay in the implementation of a housing project for the families amounted to denial of justice, the Commission chairman Antony Dominic observed. The government had entrusted the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation Limited with the construction of 32 flats. Eight flats have been completed. However, the government transferred 27.435 cents of land for building the remaining 24 flats to the St Antony's Public School. Although the school provided substitute land, the corporation informed the government that seven more cents would be needed for the project. A decision on this matter is still awaited. The Fisheries Department is yet to sanction funds for the work, which also contributed to the delay, the Commission noted. The Director, Fisheries Department, informed the Commission that the families can be rehabilitated at the flats proposed in 294 cents in Muttathara village. The Principal, St Antony's School, informed the Commission that the land transferred by the school was suitable for construction. The Commission said it will not intervene in matters related to the allocation of land. However, the delay in the housing project amounted to denial of justice, it noted, urging the Chief Secretary and the Corporation to expedite the work.

Kerala: New Central scheme brings cheer to fishing boat operators

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/new-central-scheme-brings-cheer-to-fishing-boat-operators/article36541917.ece

"Fishermen and boat owners who have been financially struggling to improve facilities in their fishing boats have expressed delight over the Fisheries Department’s move to implement a Central scheme, which promises a subsidy of up to 40% on completion of upgrading works worth Rs.15 lakh. The project implemented under the Centrally sponsored scheme, Development of Marine Fisheries, Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Operation, will come to the aid of a large number of mechanised boats in five small fishing harbours in Kozhikode district. According to Fisheries Department officials, the project is mainly aimed at promoting the export potential of marine resources and equipping fishermen to explore opportunities. Using the fund under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana, boat operators will be encouraged to improve cold storage facilities for keeping the daily catch, they said.

Under the scheme, there are also proposals to improve scientific waste treatment facilities and installation of bio-toilets. All applicants will also be eligible to claim other support schemes aimed at ensuring the safety of fishing boats by fitting advanced safety devices. Representatives of fishermen welfare organisations say a mechanised boat owner will be able to get at least Rs.6 lakh as subsidy under the project which is now under implementation across the country. Fisheries offices and Matsya Bhavans are expected to coordinate the district-level processing of applications which will be completed by September 30, they add. In Kozhikode district, there are 1,222 mechanised fishing boats registered with the Fisheries Department. Many of these

boats are now conducting only limited services due to the heavy operational cost and difficulties in meeting the annual maintenance cost. There are also boat owners who are willing to sell off their boats to overcome financial crisis.

Kerala: Kerala Coastal Area Development Corporation to expand MIMI fish outlets

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/kerala-coastal-area-development-corporation-to-expand-mimi-fish-outlets/article36549810.ece

"The Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) is opening MIMI Fish stores in Kottayam, Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta districts to expand its novel retail venture, assuring delivery of the fresh-and-cleaned fish at doorsteps. MIMI stores are coming up in 16 municipalities and 55 panchayats across the three south-central districts. Of these, six municipalities will be in Kottayam and Alappuzha districts each and four in Pathanamthitta district. As many as 20 panchayats each in Alappuzha and Kottayam and 15 panchayats in Pathanamthitta will have MIMI Fish outlets. Those interested in setting up MIMI stores in respective localities can contact authorities at http://www.parivarthanam.org/. Part of Parivarthanam project The fish, which is free from adulterating materials, will be served at doorstep as half-kg packets. Online orders can be made after installing the MIMI app. Off-line, purchases start only after MIMI stores go full-fledged in operations. Till then, the supply of fish ordered, using the app, will be through the temporary distribution centres. MIMI Fish, which was launched on August 29, made its first round of extension last week, as Kerala Fisheries Department opened outlets in 29 places of Kollam district.

MIMI Fish is part of Parivarthanam project that the government launched in November 2020, aiming to bring about a qualitative socio-economic transformation in coastal areas. The project also seeks to promote green energy and technologies and sustain the traditional fishery activities. The fish sold through MIMI strictly follows the hygienic standards and protocols set by European Union and other advanced countries in processing, preservation and storage. The fish, captured by traditional fisher folk or collected from trustworthy farms, is chilled immediately using the technology developed by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology that matches European export standards. As MIMI Fish sets the highest priority on health of its customers, its products are collected, processed, packaged and stored to international standards and hygienic parameters. Vehicles for transporting fish will have state-of-the-art refrigeration systems, so that the quality of the fish will not suffer during the transit, through all seasons.

Kerala: Punargeham scheme guidelines relaxed

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/punargeham-scheme-norms-relaxed/article36465477.ece

"In a bid to find more takers for its Punargeham rehabilitation scheme for coastal families, the State government has relaxed certain contentious norms in its guidelines that deterred many from coming under its purview. The meeting chaired by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan here on Tuesday to review the progress of the scheme decided to alter the clause that stated that if work on the house was not completed within a year of receiving the first instalment of the assistance, the beneficiary would have to return the sum along with 18% interest. The modified clause did away with the need to pay the interest amount. The government also decided to nullify the clause that required beneficiaries to relinquish their existing land if they had less than five cents. While the land would remain in their possession even after enrolling for the Punargeham scheme, they would have to demolish the existing building and also refrain from constructing new structures. They would be permitted to undertake farming or utilise the space to store their fishing equipment. The beneficiaries, who were currently required to bear the registration fees while purchasing land, would no longer be required to shoulder the burden.

Besides, while the guidelines mandated two cents of land and house with area not less than 500 sqft. in the case of those who wished to purchase existing houses under the scheme, this criterion had been decreased to 400 sqft. similar to the LIFE Mission. According to Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, the decisions had been made to convince more coastal families to avail themselves of the scheme that was aimed at rehabilitating those residing within 50 metres of the high tide line. While 18,685 such families were identified through a survey conducted in 2018, only 7,716 expressed willingness to shift to different locations. As part of the scheme, financial aid of Rs. 10 lakh was being provided to beneficiaries who were required to purchase land and construct house. While the first instalment of Rs. 6 lakh would be released to purchase land and cover registration fee, stamp duty and other costs, the second instalment of Rs. 4 lakh would be provided for the construction. Key hand-over The Chief Minister would formally hand over keys of 276 flats built in Karode (128) and Beemapally (20) in Thiruvananthapuram and Ponnani (128) in Malappuram, and 308 individual houses in various districts, all constructed under the Punargeham scheme, on Thursday, September 16. Mr. Cherian said another 36 flats being constructed at QSS Colony in Kollam would be formally launched in December. The decisions have been made to convince more coastal families to avail themselves of the scheme.

Kerala: Enrica Lexie Case: Another fisherman's mother moves Kerala High Court seeking compensation

https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/kerala-high-court-enrica-lexie-case-fisherman-mother-compensation-181578

"The Kerala High Court on Tuesday sought the Centre's response on a plea for compensation moved by the mother of a fisherman, who was allegedly aboard the fishing vessel which was fired upon by two Italian marines in 2012, and later died by suicide due to the trauma of the incident. The Court directed the central government counsel to file a statement and listed the matter for hearing after two weeks. In her plea, the petitioner had contended that the boat owner did not forward her son's name as one of the persons who was also on board the vessel and therefore, he neither received any counselling for the trauma suffered nor was considered for compensation. Subsequently, as a result of the trauma suffered during the incident, the petitioner's son committed suicide, it was submitted. She argued that her son's name ought to have been sent to the Italian authorities for consideration of appropriate compensation. Last month around 10 fishermen, who had survived the firing incident, had moved the Supreme Court seeking compensation.

Criminal proceedings were pending in India against two Italian marines, Massimilano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, who were accused of killing the two fishermen, for 9 years till the Court brought the curtains down on the matter recently after Rs 10 crore in compensation was paid by Italy to the heirs of the deceased and the boat owner. It had directed Rs 4 crore each to be given to the dependents of the two deceased fishermen and the rest Rs 2 crore would be given to the vessel owner. The top court had referred the matter to the Kerala High Court to oversee the disbursement. In a fresh plea, the 10 fishermen had said they were also injured in the incident and hence, entitled to the compensation. They had sought a stay on the disbursement till their claims were determined. The Supreme Court had recently closed the case after the Arbitral Tribunal constituted delivered its award under which Italy agreed to pay Rs 10 crore compensation, over the ex-gratia amount already paid.

On February 15, 2012, two Indian fishermen returning from a fishing expedition near Lakshadweep islands onboard fishing vessel St Antony were gunned down by two Italian marines on board an Italian flagged oil tanker Enrica Lexie. The incident occurred around 20 nautical miles off the coast of Kerala. Shortly after the incident, the Indian Coast Guard intercepted Enrica Lexie and detained the two Italian marines. Following this, the Kerala Police registered an FIR against them for murder and arrested them. In April 2013, the case was transferred to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) which invoked the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA). Italy criticised the prosecution pursuant to the SUA Convention as equating the incident to an act of terrorism. On March 7, 2014, India dropped the SUA charges against the marines. On February 7, 2014, the charges were downgraded from murder to violence meaning the marines would not face the death penalty if convicted. The complaint against the marines was lodged by Freddy on whose vessel two Kerala fishermen were killed when marines opened fire on them under the misconception that they were pirates.

Kerala: Matsyafed all set to strengthen market intervention

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/matsyafed-all-set-to-strengthen-market-intervention/article36463909.ece

"The Kerala State Cooperative Federation for Fisheries Development (Matsyafed), the apex cooperative in the fishing sector, has proposed increasing the capacity for frozen fish storage at its Kochi facility as well as utilising its full capacity and establishing similar facilities at at two other centres with a view to help fishers store their catch so as to help them negotiate better prices in the midst of allegations that the fishing community is exploited by buyers and their agents. Matsyafed has put up a proposal for renovation of the Kochi fish freezing facility and the government is likely to consider the proposals. The State government, which has been supportive of the inland and marine fisheries sectors, has provided generous support to the fishing community, said T. Manoharan, chairman of Matsyafed. He said that only about 30% to 35% of the Kochi facility was being utilised now. The capacity utilisation can be improved and operations carried out in three shifts to enable better storage. One of the problems facing the fishing community is that once the catch is landed, they are at the mercy of the buyers, who basically fix a price for the catch.

However, if the fishers are able to store their catch they will be in a position to bargain for a better deal. Matsyafed is aiming at creating such a facility across the State, said Mr. Manoharan. He said that the State government has been considerate and positive about the proposals. Matsyafed sources said that the Kochi facility was last renovated in 1997 and the plant may further be renovated to increase its storage capacity from the present 25 tonnes per day to about 60 tonnes. However, fish catch is seasonal and that is one of the reasons why the capacity utilisation is low at present. The plant can then be operated in thee shifts to cater to the new requirements and as per the plans of the cooperative. Mr. Manoharan also said that Matsyafed looked towards increasing the capacity at its three net-making facilities in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kannur so as to meet the requirements of the fishing community. Matsyafed, which has ensured quality fishing nets at affordable rate is, at present, unable to meet the entire requirement of the State. New machines are being installed in Kochi and Kannur to enhance capacity, the chairman said.

Kerala: Chinese fishing net operators fall on hard times, decry apathy

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/chinese-fishing-net-operators-fall-on-hard-times-decry-apathy/article36444093.ece

"Seventy-year-old Kunjappan pointed to a wooden stump on the famed Fort Kochi beachfront, the sole remnant of a massive Chinese fishing net he owned till a few years ago. This and many other Chinese nets that still proudly adorn tourism brochures about Kochi would still have been operational, if Kerala Tourism's Rs.2.44-crore long-overdue project to help renovate the nets using lengthy teak and Kalasanthi wood logs had materialised. "I began pulling the cantilever nets in 1965. Inadequate government support and sea erosion due to dredging of the shipping channel resulted in the number of nets dwindling from 25 to eight during the past three decades. Much of the delay in kick-starting renovation work could have been avoided if Kerala Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisation (KITCO), the implementing agency to whom the Kerala Tourism handed over half the project cost, had been proactive in sourcing lengthy teak logs [which constitute the cantilever frame of the nets] from the Forest Department," Kunjappan said.

Many of the iconic nets withered away or were dismantled, since net operators found it tough to procure teak wood on their own to replace the worn-out logs. In addition, the tough grind involved in six people having to pull the nets simultaneously, be it rain or shine, has resulted in it becoming difficult to get workers, he added. Franklin, a worker who earned a living for decades pulling the nets, pointed to how people like him fell on hard times owing to high operational cost and dwindling fish catch. He pointed to termites and the elements destroying many of the over a dozen Kalasanthi wood logs that were unloaded at the Vasco Da Gama Square over three years ago. "They could have been used to form 'hinges' which supported the massive teak logs, if the logs had been made available in time," he said. Apart from their tourism value, over 10 families are dependent on income from each net. A senior Kerala Tourism official said the project that was set in motion in 2014 was caught in red tape and many avoidable delays in implementation.

"A litigation on who would install the logs too caused delay. Soon after the Forest Department sanctioned teakwood for the purpose and issued a three-month deadline to take their possession, the pandemic set in. We have begun the process of procuring the wood in earnest," he added. He confided that Fort Kochi would lose its value as a pristine heritage locale and go the Kovalam way in less than a decade, if the nets were not conserved. In addition, encroachers who have set up kiosks and vends must be removed.

Kerala: Fish supply through MIMI App now available in 29 more places in Kollam district

http://www.uniindia.com/~/fish-supply-through-mimi-app-now-available-in-29-more-places-in-kollam-district/Business%20Economy/news/2503442.html

"A fortnight after it had launched MIMI Fish as a retail venture that assures delivery of fresh and cleaned fish at door steps, Kerala Fisheries Department extended the supply of fish to 29 more places in Kollam district.The supply of fish will now be available in two panchayats and three municipalities, besides 24 wards of Kollam Corporation, through nine MIMI Fish stores. .One MIMI centre each will function in the municipalities of Paravur, Kottarakara and Karunagappally, catering to their requirement. Panchayats of Thodiyoor and Mayyanad will have one MIMI store each. Four more MIMI stores will supply fish to 24 wards of Kollam Corporation, a release said here on Sunday.The department is planning to open more MIMI Fish outlets in other parts of Kollam besides the districts of Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta. Those interested can contact authorities at http://www.parivarthanam.org/ or +91 9383454647. The fish sold through MIMI typically follows the hygienic standards and protocols set by European Union and other advanced countries in processing, preservation and storage. The fish, captured by traditional fisher folk or collected from trustworthy farms, is chilled immediately after capture CIFT's technology that matches the European export standards.As MIMI Fish sets the highest priority on health of its customers, its products are collected, processed, packaged and stored to world-class standards and hygienic parameters.Vehicles for transporting fish will have state-of-the-art refrigeration systems, so that the quality of the fish will not suffer during the transit, through all seasons. MIMI Fish is part of the government's Parivarthanam project that was launched in November 2020, aiming to also promote green energy and technologies and help the traditional fishery activities sustainable.

Kerala: Harbours lack efficient system for search, rescue

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/harbours-lack-efficient-system-for-search-rescue/article36293041.ece

"Saravanapoyka was 40 nautical miles off the shore when the crew received a storm warning and instructions to return. Buffeted by strong winds and rough seas, the engine stopped working midway leaving the crew stranded. Their SOS calls to the Fisheries Department drew no response and it was two other fishing boats that came to their rescue. "We had to wait for hours with three injured persons on board while no marine enforcement vessel was pressed into action. They failed to offer us any help," says Rajesh, a crew member. Despite the increasing number of fatalities, most harbours in the State do not have an efficient system to carry out

marine search and rescue (SAR) operations. Lack of facilities and inadequate sea-safety measures often leave fishers vulnerable. Rescue teams with no proper training is another challenge. Rented boats The Fisheries Department uses rented fishing boats for marine enforcement and officials agree current facilities are not sufficient for rescue operations. They feel that sleek rescue vessels instead of fishing boats will help the department work more efficiently.

The government decided to form sea rescue squads after Cyclone Ockhi and selected fishers were provided training at the National Institute of Watersports in Goa. The idea was to ensure the availability of vessels with a standby crew to respond to distress calls. “It’s true that fishers are not getting any immediate help and it has many reasons. A fleet of rescue boats that can handle strong winds and waves along with an expert team is necessary for emergencies. Though the fishers were issued certificates, they cannot be used for high-risk rescue operations. Proper and continuous training is needed for that,” says Dolphin Ratheesh, a lifeguard. Coastal police station The first Coastal police station in Kerala was commissioned in 2009 at Neendakara and today the State has 18 stations in nine coastal districts. While some stations are understaffed, some others function with minimal facilities. The Neendakara station was allotted three boats in 2009, which are in disrepair due to wear and tear. Adding to their woes, Kollam, a district with a long coastline, has only one coastal police station. “It takes more than three hours for a boat from Paravur to reach Azheekkal in unfavourable weather. We need at least two more stations in districts such as Kollam,” says an official.

Karnataka: Prices nosedive as small fish consignments to Kerala stopped

https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=870538

"As smaller fish are no longer being supplied to Kerala from here, fish prices have gone down. As a result, on Sunday, mackerel was sold at the fishing dock here for as low as Rs 55 per kg. The reason for the fall in prices is that purse seine boats engaged in fishing are getting large catches of smaller fishes including mackerel. At the same time, smaller fishes are not being transported to Kerala and other places. As the sale of big catches are confined to local market, the prices have fallen. Till recently, fresh mackerels were sold for Rs 80 to 90 per kg. The fishermen attribute this to the mackerel catches being high in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. In observance of certain religious austerities in Kerala, people do not consume fish till September 17, it is said. This has also influenced the fish prices. There is good demand for high-quality fishes like pomfret, king fish, etc command good demand in Kerala, Goa, Gujarat etc and they get exported to these markets.

However, when a boat full of pomfret and kingfish were caught here and at Malpe during the last week, the rate had come down to Rs 350 a kg. Still, kingfish, pomfret etc are sold in the local market at prices that are lower as compared to earlier one. Fresh fish are also available in

hotels now. Because of this phenomenon, fishermen who get good catches are not able to make good money.

Kerala: Fishermen seek govt. intervention for boat insurance

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kerala-fishermen-seek-govt-intervention-for-boat-insurance/article36298506.ece

"A series of accidents in the sea off the coast of Kerala involving both traditionally modified canoes and fishing boats have given rise to a demand from fishers unions that the government take steps to ensure that fishing boats and traditional canoes came under insurance cover. Jackson Pollayil of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, an independent union of fishers, said insuring fishing boats involved high premium, which dissuaded a vast majority of boat owners from going for it. He said fish catch was seasonal, and that there was no certainty on regular returns from fishing ventures. Such a situation warrants hard calculations on the part of fishing boat owners, who are not always interested in investing in insurance schemes, he added. Fisheries Department sources said though boat owners had been advised to take insurance cover, they had not complied for various reasons. The vast majority of around 300 traditionally modified canoes (fishing vessels with inboard engines) in the State do not have insurance cover, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, a federation of independent unions of fishers. He alleged that fishing gear like nets did not come under the purview of insurance cover. Mr. George said the boat St. Antony, which sank off the coast of Vypeen on Wednesday morning had not been salvaged. The cost of the boat as well as the fishing gear is around Rs.1.20 core. Salvaging the vessel is a Herculean task. Most traditionally modified canoes cost between Rs.60 lakh and Rs.1 crore, he added.

Kerala: Marine Enforcement squads to crack down on use of banned pelagic nets off Kozhikode coast

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/marine-enforcement-squads-to-crack-down-on-use-of-banned-pelagic-nets-off-kozhikode-coast/article36305001.ece

"Noticing suspicious attempts on the part of some fishing boat operators to use banned pelagic nets, the Marine Enforcement squads have resumed surprise inspections in fishing boats off the Kozhikode coast. Though the illegal practice was not reported for several months, the depletion of fisheries resources and the fall in active fishing days were reportedly prompting many workers to resort to it. Officials with the Marine Enforcement squad said they had seized such stocks from a fishing boat in Beypore. The owner of the boat has been charged under the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act. There would be flash inspections covering various harbours to discourage the practice and to make fishermen aware of the danger it poses to fisheries resources, they added. The use of pelagic net is banned as it catches juvenile fish and

affects its breeding. Such nets used in trawling boats are often difficult to be detected as it is stored with the regular nets. The fish waste collected is usually sold to fertiliser manufacturing companies for additional revenue.

According to local fishers, it is the larger trawler boat owners who purchase and use the banned types of nets. They alleged that there were boats that engaged in paired trawling using pelagic nets, resulting in the destruction of juvenile fish. As the presence of enforcement squads was minimal in the deep sea region, many non-Kerala boats were flourishing in the business, they said. Besides the use of banned nets, the practice of using coconut flower stalks and high beam lights to attract fish the artificial way is also reportedly staging a comeback off the Kozhikode coast. There have been incidents in which fishing boats that used high-beam lights were impounded and hefty fines imposed on their owners. Owners of smaller fishing boats from Puthiyappa and Beypore said regular inspection around harbours could help net the illegal players in the field. According to them, the local fishers were against the illegal fishing method as it endangered their trade. There should be more patrol squads to inspect trawlers that usually left the coast during midnight, they said.

Kerala: Four fishermen die after boat capsizes off Oachira

https://www.onmanorama.com/news/kerala/2021/09/02/four-fishermen-die-as-boat-sinks-off-kollam-coast-in-kerala.html

"Four fishermen died after a fishing boat sank off the Oachira coast in Kerala's Kollam district on Thursday. Seven fishermen were rescued and five others in the boat, Omkaram, swam to safety. There were 16 people onboard Omkaram, which ventured into sea from Tharayilkadavu near Arattupuzha. The deceased have been identified as Sudevan, Sunil Dutt, Thankappan and Sreekumar, all natives of Tharayilkadavu. The bodies are now at a nearby private hospital. The rescued fisher folk were taken to the government hospital in Kayamkulam and the Alappuzha Medical College in Vandanam. Two of them are in critical condition. Fishermen said the boat capsized due to tidal waves. The boat capsized around one nautical mile away from Azheekal beach on Thursday morning. The boat is owned by Aravindan of Azheekal, the police said. Fishing boats nearby carried out the rescue operations, police said. Financial aid for families Minister for Fisheries, Saji Cherian has announced an emergency aid of Rs 10,000 for the families of the deceased and Rs 5,000 for those under treatment. Meanwhile, the fishermen have complained that the coastal police did not respond to their SOS calls over wireless. Talking to Manorama News, fishermen alleged that while the Azheekal unit that was nearby failed to reach out, those from Thottappally arrived, but it was too late.

Kerala: Why the problem of open defecation persists in coastal regions

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/why-problem-open-defecation-persists-kerala-s-

coastal-regions-154719

"Manjush, a traveller from West Bengal, visited Kerala in January 2021. Staying in a homestay in Poovar, he had a very bad experience when visiting the nearby beaches. “When you go the popular beaches here, what puts you off is the plastic waste strewn all around. But in Poovar when I visited some of the lesser-known beaches, I saw men defecating in the open and washing in the sea. I once accidentally stepped on human faeces,” he recalled. “I knew open defecation is quite common across our country, including my state, but I didn’t expect it in Kerala,” he added. In 2018, Kerala was declared an open defecation free state. But travelling through some of the regions in the state, it is apparent that the declaration is not valid. Coastal regions are one of the main examples of this. Those who visit rural beaches that have no crowds have the unpleasant experience of spotting or stepping on human faeces.Kerala becomes the first high density populated state in the country to achieve Open Defecation Free status today on its formation day,” Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan announced in a tweet in January 2018.

But some regions in the state still need awareness to complete the achievement. In coastal regions, some people are used to the practice of defecating on the beach as they have to go fishing early in the morning. “Fisherfolk go to the beach at 2 am or 3 am to check the weather conditions at sea. After reaching there, they don’t go back home for their morning necessities. This is an issue across the state, however the younger generations are not practising it,” Jackson Pollayil, President of the Kerala Independent Fisher Workers Federation, told TNM. He added that since the fishermen have to go to work early in the morning, it is a question of how to solve the issue. Charles George, Mathsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi President, also echoes the same opinion. “The older generation has been practising it. Now there is a rule that bigger boats should have toilet facilities,” he said. Kristuraj, a 45-year-old fisherman from Thiruvananthapuram’s Pozhikkara, says, “Not everyone does it, but a few people follow this habit even now, conveniently defecating in the sand. It’s a nuisance not only for visitors but for other fishermen too. The offenders know our children come to play here in the sand, but they are not bothered,” he said.

The fishermen associations are not very focused on the issue as they have to deal with a lot of other troubles faced by the community. “We have warned them about this many times. Though they have a toilet at home, they find it easy to defecate on the beach. They say they need to go to work early in the day. We have no idea how to solve this issue,” Roseline, a former panchayat ward member from a coastal village in Thiruvananthapuram, said. On the other hand, the community also faces the issue of lack of toilets. Massive beach erosion and high tides have caused major damage to the houses and toilets of people living in many of the coastal regions. Amina, who lives near Kozhikode’s South Beach, says they depend on open air

for defecation.

“Most of the toilets in our area were destroyed by the sea. Some of them were partially destroyed, with the roof and door gone missing. Since our houses are so close to the sea, new construction is not allowed. Men go to the toilet easily in the open, we wait till late night,” she said. Most of the houses are on poramboke land so the municipality also does not help them. Similar is the situation in Thiruvananthapuram’s Valiyathura, where the toilets and houses were destroyed in sea attacks, following which the residents have been forced to defecate in the open. “Across the state many of the toilets have been damaged due to sea erosion. There are still many houses in the coastal areas with no proper toilets. Many residents are also forced to live in relief camps for a long time,” Mageline Philomina Yohannan, a renowned activist working among the fishing community, said.

Kerala: Minister announces Rs.344.2 cr project for coastal protection

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/relief-for-chellanam-minister-announces-rs-344-2-cr-project-for-coastal-protection-new-project-for-chellanam-1.5956976

"Minister of Water Resources Roshy Augustine announced the Chellanam Coastal Protection Project. The Minister announced Rs 344.2 crore for the protection of the coast using tetrapods. 'Chellanam residents are the first to flee their homes whenever low pressure area and cyclone forms in the sea. A permanent solution is needed in this area as no temporary solutions are possible. The government is planning to implement a scheme in such a way that the residents will not have to be relocated due to adverse weather conditions.The government has sanctioned `Rs 1500 crore for the first phase of the project. The tender process will start by September 15, ”said Minister Roshy Augustine. The minister announced the project at a function held in Chellanam Bazaar on Monday. With this, the locals and the government are hoping that the ongoing problems in the area will be resolved. The coastal protection project is conceived with the help of modern technology based on a study conducted by Chennai-based National Centre for Coastal Research. A study on coastal areas across the state has identified 10 hotspots facing severe coastal erosion.

Of these hotspots, priority is given to Chellanam coast. In addition to protecting the coast with tetrapods, activities using the geotubes are also being implemented in the area. The first phase is the rehabilitation of the sea wall near the harbour in Chellanam panchayath and the construction of a 1.90 km tetrapod at the Bazaar Kannamali area. The first phase of construction will begin on ten hotspots facing the severe tidal wave attack. Rs 5300 crore will be fully utilized within five years for coastal protection. A tourism centre will be established in Chellanam with the collaboration of the Department of Tourism. The Minister said that the Irrigation Department has started the process of establishing dam centred tourism centres. The government has earmarked Rs 5300 crore for coastal protection activities across the state. The

Irrigation Department, with the help of KIIFB, has approved a project of Rs 344.2 crores to set up tetrapods at Chellanam. The project aims to solve the problem of tidal wave attacks and make Chellanam a model fishing village. Interestingly, Chellanam is selected for Kerala's first fish village project.

Kerala: Four fishers killed as boat capsizes near Azheekkal

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/four-fishers-killed-as-boat-capsizes-near-azheekkal-in-kerala/article36244396.ece

"Four fishers were killed and 12 others were hospitalised when a boat capsized near Azheekkal on Thursday. The deceased have been identified as Thankappan, Sunil Dutt, Sudevan and Sreekumar. The accident took place around one nautical mile off the shore. Though they were rushed to nearby hospitals, their lives could not be saved. Reportedly, the boat Omkaram lost balance and capsized after it got caught in the fishing net. Since the incident took place very near the shore, rescue operations were launched immediately. Most of the fishers were brought to the shore by other fishing boats. The condition of the hospitalised fishers is not serious and they are recovering, said an official.

Kerala: 48 fishers rescued off Vypeen coast

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/48-fishers-rescued-off-vypeen-coast/article36240787.ece

"Forty-eight fishers aboard the boat “St. Antony” were rescued after it hit the wreckage of a fishing vessel that had sunk off the coast of Vypeen, close to the Kochi shipping channel. The collision took place around 5.30 a.m. on Wednesday, said a spokesman for the traditional fishers’ association, Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali Union, at Vypeen. P.V. Jayan of the union said that fishers on boats nearby came to the rescue of those on the boat. Their timely intervention helped save the lives of the 48 fishers, he said. According to fishers, two boats had sunk off the coast of Vypeen and the wreckages have been posing a hindrance to the movement of fishing boats, especially during the low tide. One of these boats, Poornasree, had sunk in the third week of May, 2021, and another boat, Ashiqmon, on August 31, said Charles George of Matysa Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, a union of traditional fishers. Fishers’ unions have appealed to the Cochin Port Trust to help retrieve the wreckages to avoid recurrence of such incidents. K.N. Unnikrishnnan, Vypeen MLA, has written to Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, pointing out that the accident in the early hours of Wednesday occurred after the fishing boat ran into the wreckage.

While the primary responsibility of removing the remains of a sunken boat remained with the boat owner, institutions like the Cochin Port Trust should be held liable to pay compensation to the affected fishers for its failure to ensure that the wreckage was removed in a timely manner,

he said. Group insurance Mr. Unnikrishnan said that since the premium for insurance was high, boat owners were reluctant to insure their vessels and that the Fisheries Department should make sure that boat owners and workers received group insurance cover. The MLA said that unless the wreckage of sunken boats was removed or if proper signage was not put up to mark the spots, more accidents were likely in the area.

Kerala: More fish farmers take to cage culture

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/more-fish-farmers-take-to-cage-culture/article36213039.ece

"Cage culture, which ensures a good yield, has become the latest rage among fish farmers in the district. According to many, cage farming carried out with quality fish seed is a risk-free method compared to others and it offers them a handsome harvest most times. While the method is popular in rural Kollam and islands such as Munroe Thuruthu, more and more farmers are opting for it of late. “Since there is a drop in marine catch, there are many takers for our fish. Most farmers who started cage culture are reporting good results and it is inspiring a lot of newcomers,” says Unnikrishnan, a farmer from Kallada. The Fisheries Department is also promoting cage farming and four units were started in the district with 90% subsidy as part of the government’s 100-day action plan. In connection with the Fisheries Department’s Blue Revolution programme, 10-member fisher groups were provided subsidy to install units that cost Rs.60 lakh each.

Farmers are using 20 floating cages, each four-metre in length, width, and height. A total of 24,000 fish seeds, including pearl spot, pompano and sea bass, were ranched and each unit is expected to produce 19 tonnes of fish within one year. Snehatheeram, a unit from Neendakara, received a reasonably good yield which was sold for export. MLA Sujith Vijayan Pillai, who made the first sale, said such projects would solve the crisis faced by fishers due to squally weather. District panchayat president Sam K Daniel, Matsyafed chairman T.Manoharan and Neendakara grama panchayat president P.R. Ranjith were present.

Kerala: Free bus service for women fish vendors

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/free-bus-service-for-women-fish-vendors/articleshow/85723115.cms

"Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan flagged off the free bus service for women fish vendors in the district here on Saturday. The project is being jointly executed by KSRTC and department of fisheries. Minister for transport Antony Raju who was present on the occasion said that the number of buses under the Samudra scheme would be increased. “The routes will be finalized based on the convenience of fish vendors. Fisheries department pays KSRTC an amount of Rs 24 lakh a year for one bus,” said Raju. The minister said that KSRTC was

planning to launch a mobile ration shop in association with civil supplies corporation. Minister for fisheries Saji Cherian said that the hardships being faced by fish vendors and travel woes would be addressed through this venture. KSRTC has deployed three low-floor buses for the project. The buses will operate from 6am to 10am from fishing harbours to various markets.

A bus has a capacity to carry 24 passengers. Roll platform to load fish baskets, driver-operated doors which can be monitored by cameras, music system, rear camera, collection tank for storing saline water are the key features of Samudra bus. Cherian said that 20,000 houses would be constructed in coastal sector in addition to houses being constructed under the LIFE Mission. “Seafood restaurants will be opened in all districts. The work on construction of a building for a seafood restaurant is currently underway at Vizhinjam,” he said.

Kerala: Govt launches MIMI mobile app for home delivery of fresh fish

http://www.uniindia.com/kerala-launches-mimi-mobile-app-for-home-delivery-of-fresh-fish/south/news/2488983.html

"Kerala Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan on Friday launched the mobile app of MIMI Fish Store, a retail venture of the State Fisheries Department’ for home delivery of fresh fish and value-added products.In a first in the country, MIMI Fish gives the consumers complete access to the details of the fish they buy. The consumers can get their fish home-delivered by placing the order through the Mobile App, or purchase directly from the nearest MIMI kiosk.“Apart from fresh fish, a variety of other fish-based value-added products can also be accessed by consumers with the help of MIMI App,"" the Minister said.

Kerala: Jellyfish influx worries fisherfolk in coasts

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/jellyfish-influx-worries-fisherfolk/articleshow/85723911.cms

"The jellyfish have been a growing menace along the Kerala coasts, and its abundance has been directly correlated with its effect on major fisheries like the Indian oil sardines. Such is the menace that when these swarms appear, fishermen avoid fishing as their nets are filled with these jellyfishes. This week too, jellyfish swarms were reported by fishermen in Thiruvananthapuram when they went to the sea after Onam. These swarms are noted during the monsoon season and stay on till the non-monsoon. “However, monsoons do not play a role in jellyfish increase. These are marine organisms, and hence their presence is directly related to the oceans and sea environment,” said Prof A Biju Kumar, head-department of aquatic biology, Kerala University. In a study published by a journal of marine biology research, five species of jellyfish that appeared in abundance on the Kerala coast have been documented. “Around 15 species have been seen in Kerala, but these five (Crambionella orsini, Lychnorhiza malayensis, Chrysaora caliparea, Netrostoma coerulescens and Cyanea nozaki) are in abundance. “We were

looking at the relationship between the chemical components in the water when they appeared.

There is a direct correlation between salinity, phosphate, silicate and chlorophyll-a content in water as well as the pH and sea surface temperatures (SST)," he said. The study, which looked at the trawler catches for four years from 2016-2019, found an abundance of the four species - Lychnorhiza malayensis, Chrysaora caliparea, Netrostoma coerulescens and Cyanea nozaki - increased with phosphate, silicate and chlorophyll-a content and decreased with pH and SST. In contrast, the abundance of Crambionella orsini increased with an increase in sea surface salinity and decreased with an increase in dissolved oxygen. Biju Kumar said that it was important to understand the toxic behavior also. "People have reported wounds when they touch the jellyfish. It is a predator and releases a toxin that causes itching and wounds in people prone to allergies. Internationally where people go swimming in seas, a jellyfish swarm is a warning for people to stay away and even leads to the closure of beaches. "We need to understand the toxic nature of the jellyfish, which is also affecting the marine catch," he said.

Kerala: In Kuttanad, climate change is forcing residents to abandon their homes

https://scroll.in/article/1003721/in-keralas-kuttanad-climate-change-is-forcing-residents-to-abandon-their-homes

"Kuttanad in Kerala is a picture-perfect location with vast waters surrounding its palm-fringed emerald islets. This region of the Alappuzha district in Kerala lies more than two metres below sea level and has the lowest altitude in India. It is serviced by the state's significant rivers Pampa, Meenachil, Achan Kovil and Manimala in addition to Vembanad-Kol wetland, India's second-largest wetland ecosystem. Luxury houseboats occupy the lake and several canals link it with the rivers, while numerous cottages and eateries dot the islands. Kuttanad is a waterlogged region that spreads over about 1,10,000 hectares. Of it, more than 50,000 hectares remain submerged in water for most of the year. Widely known as the rice bowl of Kerala, it is one of the few places in the world, and the only one in India, where farming activities are being held below sea level.

The region has more than 18 lakh residents, and most of them are agricultural workers who do not own the rice fields where they work. According to KG Padmakumar, special officer and director of Kuttanad-based International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming, the once abundant paddy cultivation has given the region its name. It is a massive area of reclaimed land which remains supported by fragile dikes from vast amounts of water. But the region that once attracted settler farmers from outside is now seeing an exodus as many local people, unable to withstand the effects of climate change and human factors, are abandoning the region. Everybody who can, is leaving now and Kuttanad is turning into a cluster of ghost villages surrounded by water, said Santhosh Eruthiyel, who recently left Kuttamangalam Island in Kainakary panchayat to go to Cherthala. On the other hand, Cherthala

region, 30-km away, faces no issues of waterlogging and food. As per the state government's estimate, over 6,000 families of Kuttanad have abandoned their houses and properties in the last two years. Climate refugees The waters in the rivers and the Vembanad Lake ecosystem, which were an icon of prosperity are now turning into a threat to the lives and livelihood of the people. Eruthiyel, who lived in Kainakary all his life, is now nostalgic about his abandoned house, which once had beauty and tranquillity.

"It was after the massive Kerala floods of 2018 that my family decided to leave," he said. "We have been facing at least half a dozen floods a year for over a decade and things got aggravated after the 2018 floods. Now, everything remains submerged for a long time. How can you cook and eat in a kitchen filled with water? Nights are fearful as water can enter anytime without warning. Whenever there is rain, the outer bounds of the paddy fields suffer breach, risking numerous lives." A professional electrician, Eruthiyel, bought a piece of land at Poojaveli in Cherthala and built a house and now sleeps without fear of the waters threatening to disrupt nights. But for Vinodini Raju, her husband and two school-going daughters who live in the waterlogged Kanakaseri Island in Kainakary panchayat, there is no means to abandon the house built using bank loans and find another outside the region. Most parts of their house, including the kitchen and toilet, remain inundated for over seven months of a year, said her daughters Pooja and Anamika, who study at the higher secondary level.

The same is the case of Shyja and her husband Jyothish of Meenappulli, whose house is almost entirely inundated. A cook with a houseboat, Jyothish was laid off and unemployed after the Covid-19 lockdowns put a halt on domestic and foreign tourists coming to the region. For sixty-two-year old widow V Sasiamma, some government aid turned out to be a bit of luck just ahead of the southwest monsoon. She left her home in Kainakary, which had recurring floods, to buy a plot of land in Muhamma near Cherthala town. When contacted by Mongabay-India, Kuttanad taluk officer TI Vijayasenan confirmed that there is a trend among families, who can afford it, to buy land outside Kuttanad and build houses there. People are migrating to nearby Cherthala, Alappuzha and Changanassery. "The poor have nowhere to go, and they are becoming victims of frequent flooding. The government is now evolving strategies to prevent flooding in Kuttanad, but those may take time," he said. "We have become climate refugees," said PB Vijimon, who recently bought land in Kalavoor in Alappuzha and started constructing a new house there.

"We are losing our land. In addition to climate change, unscientific construction of large-scale tourism resorts, roads, bridges and other infrastructure facilities have contributed to the present grim situation. Lack of river management and backwater region protection facilities are making the situation worse. P Prasad, a Cherthala-based real estate broker, said he has been receiving numerous inquiries from people of Kuttanad who have no option other than relocation. "For us, life is not the same since the devastating deluge of 2018," said MD Salim, a rice farmer of

Kanakassery. “We are forced to either flee and rent or buy a house in less flood-prone nearby areas or continue to live here fearing floods of different magnitudes whenever it rains.” Floods changed everything the wetland agriculture system of Kuttanad is a unique one that facilitates paddy cultivation below sea level on small patches of land created by draining delta swamps in brackish waters.

“The whole Kuttanad has over 500 years of history of draining delta swamps manually by poor Dalit workers who remained slaves of powerful landlords. The whole region is artificial and is made of reclamation using traditional means,’’ said Padmakumar of International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming. Here the agricultural system is divided into three segments: wetlands are used for paddy activities and catching fish while the garden lands are used for coconut, tuber and food crops plantation. In addition, water areas are being used for inland fishing and shells. “The rice and fish cultivation had ensured livelihood to most people here while houseboat tourism has evolved in recent years as a new form of livelihood,” explained Padmakumar. Most people in Kuttanad agree that flooding was a part of their life for centuries. They knew how to live with water all around them, even during heavy monsoons. To them, water proximity was always a regular thing. But since the floods of 2018, the character and after-effects of rains and floods have started changing. Since 2018, Kuttanad has been witnessing frequent floods with high devastation capability.

Even when other parts of Kerala are not experiencing any kind of waterlogging, flooding is happening in Kuttanad. “After 2018, I could not sleep on rainy days,” said B Asokan, who now lives in Muhamma. “Instead, I would sit guard checking whether the water level is rising more than normal. During one such night, the water level increased suddenly in 2020, and my wife and I fled, carrying our eight-year-old grandson. We could not take anything when we fled. Now, my house of decades is destroyed, and there is not even a stone left from it.” Now, the heavy rains and resultant floods are impacting livelihoods as well. Last year, farmers here did not earn anything from paddy farming due to the significant scale collapse of bunds and the pandemic-induced lockdown. However, those who leased paddy lands had to pay the landowners. Farmers and experts say that the land areas in Kuttanad are fast sinking, and even ripples caused by moving boats cause water to enter the compounds. Kuttanad people are living on land and houses they inherited from their ancestors through generations. As no one from outside wants to buy their property because of the frequent floods, selling and moving out has turned impossible. Around a decade ago, the state government had plans of implementing a package worth Rs 1,840 crore, that was developed by experts, led by internationally known scientist MS Swamminathan.

However, nothing concrete has taken place so far. Because of floods and inundation, people who can afford it are building new houses on large pillars and keeping their rooms far above the expected rising water level. Now the demand is that the government must construct such

houses for the poor. “Until a decade ago, we had a proper drainage system that could minimise the duration of flooding,” said KV Dayal, a local environmentalist. “Unscientific developmental projects like big bunds, massive roads and bridges have disrupted the existing systems. Flood management systems are required now, and they must consider the region’s fragile ecosystem too.” Sixty-one-year-old P Sisupalan, a resident of Kuttanad, attempted rebuilding his home after he turned homeless in the 2018 floods. However, the 2019 floods washed away the new house’s foundation, and then he completely abandoned the idea. Local people say more families would be forced to migrate in the coming months as the government has done nothing so far to restore the ecology of Kuttanad and make it flood-free.

“Climate change is now getting aggravated along with after-effects of wrong notions of development,” said VN Jayachandran, president of the district unit of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, the state’s popular science movement. “We do not know how long the place will remain habitable with hardly any measures to protect the low-lying areas. Those people who have no other place to go are forced to live here.” Scarce drinking water Though it is surrounded by water, Kuttanad is known for drinking water scarcity. In almost all parts, piped water is available only twice a week, that too for an hour, often at night. So people are buying drinking water by travelling to other locations using their country boats. In many parts of Kuttanad, sewage is being released into the same canals from which people are drawing water for drinking and cooking needs. In many households, there are toilets built with direct outlets into the canals and streams of the backwater system. Water in the rice fields is polluted by pesticides. Solid waste from medical college hospitals at Alappuzha and Kottayam, sewage of municipal towns of Kottayam, Cherthala, Thiruvalla, Changanassery and Alappuzha, the oil and faecal wastes from about 300 houseboats which are being operated between Alappuzha and Kumarakom, all find a dumping place in the Vembanad lake.

During the famous Sabarimala pilgrimage season, the river Pampa turns into a sewage drain. As per surveys conducted by the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management in Kozhikode, almost 80% of the people in Kuttanad rely on the contaminated canal water for their daily water requirements. Infrastructure development has not only destroyed Kuttanadu’s fragile ecosystem but also made the climate change situation worse. The famous Thanneermukkam bund was constructed across the Vembanad Lake in 1975 to prevent saline water intrusion into rice fields, especially during dry seasons, thus enhancing rice farming. “The natural flushing through tidal movements which existed in the entire Lower Kuttanad for several centuries has ceased since its construction,” according to Madhusoodana Kurup, a fisheries scientist who conducted a water balance study in the region in 1988-’90. “Kuttanad is a victim of misplaced and impractical developmental schemes. The backwaters themselves are vanishing due to climate change and human interventions. The government must evolve strategies that can involve the spirit of human coexistence with water and low-lying areas,” said

the International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming's Padmakumar.

Kerala: To get India's first solar fishing boats

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/state-to-get-indias-1st-solar-fishing-boats/articleshow/85746927.cms

"India's first sea-going solar fishing boats will be ready by Dec 2021 at Vypeen and Munambam in Kerala. Funded by Shell Foundation, the charity arm of British-Dutch petroleum company, five boats are in various stages of development and the works are done by a startup named NavAlt Solar and Electric Boats. CEO of NavAlt, Sandith Thandasherry said there are over 2.5 lakh small fishing boats in India and 1.13 tonnes of CO2 are released/tonne of live weight of marine fish netted. Shell Foundation is supporting the project with Rs 5 crore, which includes the cost of developing the boats as well as financing the buyers to cover the extra cost compared to a traditional boat. NavAlt made headlines when it launched a solar water taxi and the country's first solar ferry in Kerala. "As per estimates, a conventional small boat will consume 2,500 litres of fuel/year, which results in 5-6 tonnes of carbon emissions/year. Multiplied by 2.5 lakh boats in India, it gives the size of carbon emission, which is massive in terms of environmental impact," he said.

Convincing fisher folk to switch to a new technology with which they are unfamiliar is a hurdle, he said. To understand the needs of the fishermen, Thandasherry went to Gujarat in 201X. "Right from there till West Bengal, traditional fishing boats are almost the same, with only minor design changes," he said. There, he converted a conventional 32-ft wooden boat by retrofitting solar panels and motor. "Functionally it worked, but economically it struggled because the drag of the conventional boat was too high," he added. Hence, NavAlt went on to design a lighter boat. "We had two designs – a single-hull one which could land on the beach and a double-hull one that could enter the sea from the lake where it is moored," he said. On these boats, he fitted a modular energy box that could easily be unmounted and taken home to use as a power source. While a conventional boat costs around Rs 2.5 lakh, NavAlt is planning to sell their solar ones at Rs 10 lakh.

"We told Shell Foundation that if they could pay the difference of 7.5 lakh, the fisherman could pay back the sum as EMI, instead of the fuel bills. So, from day one onwards, they will have a better livelihood," Thandasherry said, adding that net income of a typical boat owner is low because of fuel bills that come to Rs 2.5 lakh a year. NavAlt also wanted funds from Shell Foundation to scale up the project so that the boat's cost could be brought down to Rs 10 lakh, from the manufacturing cost of Rs 25 lakh. "We will reach the Rs 10-lakh price level by the 100th boat. Till then we will be losing money on each boats we sell. So, we needed a gap funding of Rs 3.5 crore from Shell, which they agreed," he said, adding that Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh are interested in the project. Meanwhile, NavAlt is also engaged in the

development of electric motors for boats. “They cost Rs 4 lakh each, which we are trying to bring down to Rs 1 lakh,” he said.

Kerala: Stir in support of fish vendor called off

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/aug/25/stir-in-support-of-fish-vendor-called-off-2349352.html

"The Forane Action Council, Anchuthengu, which had launched an agitation against the alleged manhandling of fish vendor Alphonsa by Attingal municipality staff, has called off the stir following talks with the ministers. Ministers V Sivankutty and Antony Raju assured the Action Council representatives that the government will consider withdrawing the case against Alphonsa for selling fish by the roadside in violation of rules. The ministers informed the Action Council that no proceedings will be initiated against the fish vendor for violating the Street Vendors Act. The ministers also gave an undertaking that the government will give protection to fish vendors and take up their complaints of alleged police excesses with the higher-ups in the department.

A study will be carried out on the condition of the fish market in Attingal and areas where street vending of fish can be allowed and the report will be handed over to the municipality. Besides, it was decided to ensure the participation of Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian in a district-level meeting to discuss ways to create a proper environment for peaceful and legally permissible roadside vending of fish. Following the assurances from the government, Action Council leaders Fr Justin Judin, Fr Lucian Thomas and Jude George called off the agitation.

Kerala: Coastal families look up to sky with worry

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/aug/25/coastal-families-look-up-to-sky-with-worry-2349269.html

"With the Northeast Monsoon and next cyclone season fast approaching, the coastal belt in the capital continues to be under strong sea erosion threat. Almost every project planned by the government to address the coastal erosion remains on paper, putting hundreds of fisherman families under threat. The project to construct a 700-metre-long breakwater to protect the shoreline from Poonthura to Valiyathura — one of the worst-hit areas in the capital, continues to drag on. Though the state government announces huge financial packages to protect and develop the coastal belt which is deteriorating year after year because of the unpredictable weather conditions, cyclones and unscientific constructions, the funds remain unutilised because of lack of projects. This year too, the state government has announced a whopping Rs 11,000-crore package to mitigate coastal distress and ensure the protection of the shoreline. More than 28 per cent of the entire fishermen community in the state is from Thiruvananthapuram. Hundreds of families have lost their homes and continue to live in relief

camps and every year more families are getting displaced.

The entire coastal belt is severely battered by heavy sea erosion making it impossible for the fishermen even to venture into the sea. Fisherman forced to go to Vizhinjam Debyans S, a fisherman hailing from Poonthura, said the fishermen from the area are forced to go to Vizhinjam for fishing as it's impossible to venture into the sea at Poonthura because of severe sea erosion. "This is one of the worst-affected areas and everyday we travel to Vizhinjam for fishing. If the project is implemented, we can do it here itself and save money which is being spent on travelling," says Debyans. The Poonthura breakwater project has faced a major setback with IIT Madras raising concern about the quality of the material being used for its construction. The project has suffered huge delays because of the pandemic and tender-related issues. The offshore breakwater is planned 120 metres away from Poonthura coast. There will be five small breakwaters of 100 metres in length lined up at a depth of six metres in the sea. The geocomposite tubes, filled with sand, is expected to weaken the waves and also help beach formation.

The pilot project, which is estimated to cost around Rs 18 crore, is being implemented with the technical support of the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), which carried out a model study for the project. An official of Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC), the agency implementing the project, said the IIT hasn't approved the material and more samples would be tested to get the approval. "It took almost two months to get the quality check report from IIT Madras and we have decided to approach other internationally accredited agencies to check more samples to avoid further delay," said the official. They cannot go ahead with the project without getting the quality approval of the material used for the project. "The contractor would start the work immediately once we get the clearance and would be completed in no time," the official added. Fishing harbour remains on paper General convenor of Valiyathura Thuramugha Samrakshana Vikasana Samithi Melvin Vinod said several projects being planned remain on paper, including the mini-fishing harbour project. The Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority had granted clearance for the fishing harbour project back in 2014.

"As per the environmental impact study, the fishing harbour would have helped mitigate sea erosion along the coast. The project had proposed a groyne field consisting of three T-groynes on the northern side of the harbour to combat sea erosion. This would have helped avoid the sea erosion at Poonthura, Valiyathura and Shankhumukham," said Vinod. Former Valiyathura councillor Tony Oliver said hundreds of families are on the verge of displacement. "The sea has turned unpredictable like the weather conditions. The families are getting displaced after every cyclone and monsoon. Hundreds of families have lost their homes and a large majority are yet to get houses promised by the state government. More families will lose homes if the

government fails to protect the coast," said Oliver.

Kerala: KWA considering desalination systems in coastal areas

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/kwa-moots-desalination-systems-in-coastal-areas/article36071294.ece

"The quest for clean drinking water for the heavily populated coastal areas has prompted the Kerala Water Authority (KWA) to take a closer look at seawater desalination. The KWA has opened discussions with the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences for identifying desalination systems that are suitable for the State's coastal environment. The Fisheries Department also has been linked to the proposal as coastal fishing villages and harbours are potential beneficiaries, KWA managing director S. Venkatesapathy said. Discussion Following a preliminary discussion, the KWA, the Fisheries Department, and the NIOT have appointed nodal officers for examining the viability of the proposal, a senior KWA official said.

"Desalination technologies are currently more expensive than conventional water treatment methods. There are multiple technologies available today. But we also need to assess factors such as the water requirement and the availability of land for taking the proposal forward," the official said. In the just-concluded session of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Water Resources Minister Roshy Augustine had outlined the government's plans to collaborate with NIOT on seawater desalination, adding that detailed studies would be required before a pilot scheme is rolled out, given the cost factor. Kerala has a 590-km coastline But coastal regions also tend to be plagued by drinking water shortages as, invariably, they exist at the tail-end of water supply schemes. That being the case, they are also the first places where the taps run dry when a disruption occurs in the distribution network, according to KWA officials. New technology NIOT, Chennai, has successfully demonstrated technologies such as Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) process which hinges on the temperature variations in sea water at varying depths. In this process, the warm surface water is flash-evaporated at a low pressure. Fresh water is produced by condensing the resulting vapour with colder sea water.

Kerala: Cage fish farming launched in major reservoirs

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/cage-fish-farming-launched-in-major-reservoirs-of-kerala/article36045499.ece

"The Aquaculture Development Agency Kerala (ADAK) has begun fish seed stocking in three of the four reservoirs in Kerala, where it has been permitted to launch cage fish culture. The launch of cage culture in reservoirs is a big step towards improving fish production against the backdrop of dwindling wild catch and marks a new beginning in the exploitation of the vast

area available for aquaculture in the State, said ADAK managing director Dinesan Cheruvat on Sunday. The aquaculture agency was granted permission by the Water Resources Department, Kerala State Electricity Board, and the Forest Department to launch cage culture in Banasura Sagar and Karapuzha reservoirs in Wayanad district, Peruvannamuzhi in Kozhikode district, and Kakki in Pathanamthitta district. Seed stocking has begun in the first three reservoirs, and cages are being installed at Kakki. While Banasura Sagar, Karapuzha and Peruvannamuzhi reservoirs will see cage culture of improved variety of tilapia, Kakki reservoir will see culture of indigenous varieties of pearl spot (Karimeen) and anabas (Kaithakkora).

The ADAK official said there was huge demand for fresh fish, and marketing arrangements were being made to ensure that farmers under SC-ST Reservoir Fisheries Societies got a good price for the produce. There will be over 100 cages per reservoir, with each expected to produce a tonne of fish. The cages measure 6x4x4, totalling 96 cubic metres, and can stock between 3,000 and 4,000 fingerlings each. Tilapia can be harvested for sale within six months. It will take around 10 months for pearl spot and anabas to be harvested. The equation works out well considering the current prices of fish.

While tilapia sells at around Rs.200 a kg, pearl spots and anabas sell at between Rs.300 and Rs.400. The launch of aquaculture in reservoirs will augment income for hundreds of families, and the venture is backed by the Prime Minister's Matsya Sampada Yojana with an investment of Rs.16 crore, Mr. Cheruvat said. He added that aquaculture was the fastest growing segment in the primary sector and holds out great promise for the future, especially against the backdrop of waterbodies remaining underutilised. "Reservoir aquaculture is considered a sleeping giant", and reservoir fisheries have immense potential. There are a total of 47 reservoirs in the State which can be utilised for aquaculture. They can be fields where 50,000 tonnes of fish can be produced a year and backwaters, where the potential for fish production is huge," he added.

Kerala: Italian marines case: SC tells Kerala HC not to issue compensation

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/italian-marines-case-sc-tells-kerala-hc-not-to-issue-compensation-101629403860364.html

"The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Kerala high court to not disburse the amount of Rs.2 crore earmarked for the owner of the fishing vessel 'St Antony', which was attacked by two Italian marines aboard the Italian flagship Enrica Lexie in February 2012 after seven crew members demanded their share from his compensation. Two Indian fishermen were killed in the incident. On June 15 this year, the Supreme Court closed all proceedings in India against the Italian marines, Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone, after being informed that compensation of Rs.10 crore for the families of the victims has been deposited in the registry of the top court. The case was then transferred to the Kerala high court so that disbursement could be properly monitored. India accused the two marines on board the MV

Enrica Lexie -- an Italian flagged oil tanker -- of killing the two Indian fishermen who were on a fishing vessel in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in February 2012. The owner of the fishing boat 'St Antony', in which two Kerala fishermen were killed when the marines opened fire on them allegedly under the misconception that they were pirates, filed the complaint against the Italians.

In April, the Centre informed the Supreme Court that the families of the two deceased fishermen have been "adequately" compensated and sought expeditious closure of proceedings before the top court and a criminal trial pending before a special court in Delhi. The Centre's compliance affidavit dated January 5 said the Italian government offered to pay a total of Rs.10 crore in damages. The deceased fishermen's families have agreed to compensation of Rs.4 crore each in addition to the Rs.2 crore already paid by the Italian government. The injured owner of the boat also consented to receive damages of Rs.2 crore. The payout was part of an Arbitral Award of May 21, 2020, passed by the Arbitral Tribunal, set up under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). This required India to close criminal proceedings against the two Italian marines while Italy was asked to continue with the proceedings. On Thursday, advocate Manish Dembla, appearing for the seven crew members who were onboard St Antony when the marines attacked it, submitted that no compensation has been directed to be paid to them, and sought a stay on the disbursement of Rs.2 crore earmarked for the boat owner.

"While directing the apportionment of compensation in the order (of June 15), the moral harm suffered by the captain and other crew members of St Antony has escaped the attention of the Supreme Court, perhaps, on account of the fact that crew members were not represented in the hearing," said the application. The seven fishermen also wrote to the Kerala government to get their share out of the Rs.2 crore payable to the boat owner. On June 24, Kerala's Additional Chief Secretary said this was not possible as the order of the Supreme Court did not record their entitlement. Appearing for the Centre, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta suggested that the applicants be sent to the Kerala high court, which is considering the aspect of apportionment. Hearing the matter, a division bench comprising Justice Indira Banerjee and Justice V Ramasubramanian, said that if the compensation is being sought out of the compensation to be paid to boat owners of St Antony, they need to be made a party. The court also issued a notice to the boat owner to ascertain whether the seven fishermen were employed with St Antony. "The notice of this application be given to the boat owner and in the meanwhile, we request the Kerala High Court not to disburse any amount to the boat owner in terms of the June 15, 2021 order," the bench said.

Kerala: How climate change is taking a toll on livelihoods of small-scale fishers

https://india.mongabay.com/2021/08/how-climate-change-is-taking-a-toll-on-livelihoods-

of-small-scale-fishers-in-kerala/

"Until recently, Kerala's coastal population had every reason to rejoice the arrival of the monsoon in the state. Apart from numerous good fishing hauls, the important celebratory moments like weddings came about during the monsoon season which spans from June to August, as they generally attained economic stability during the period. However, over the last few years, climate change and the ensuing shifts in the marine environment have disrupted the rhythm of their lives. Long gone are the days of big catches and the subsequent rise in seasonal income for the small-scale fishers. "Our age-old custom of planning and celebrating big events during the monsoon season has come to a halt as this period no longer offers us a stable income for the past few years. Lately, the monsoon is quite erratic in its patterns resulting in a reduction in the number of fishing days, and thus becoming the worst-hit season of the year," says 55-year old Ponnan K., a traditional fisherman from Alappuzha. - Erratic monsoon patterns and other disruptions by climate change are reducing number of fishing days as well as fishing stock in the waters of coastal Kerala. - There has been a steady decrease, over the past five years, in the availability of oil sardine and this is hitting the economic stability of coastal communities. - The income of small-scale fishers in Kerala, who depend on fishing for daily needs, has drastically reduced in recent years. People are quitting fishing and looking for other livelihood options to support their families.

In addition, the unavailability of commercially important fishes also adds to their woes. "These days we return with empty boats. Going out fishing only adds to our debts," says Unnikrishnan T.B., another fisherman from Vypin in Ernakulam district. Like Ponnan and Unnikrishnan, as many as 1,37,248 active fishermen in Kerala are passing through a difficult phase in their life, as the impacts of climate change are taking a toll on the livelihoods of the small-scale fishermen who go for fishing primarily to feed their families on daily basis. A series of environmental phenomena such as rapid warming of the Indian Ocean, sea-level rise, frequent occurrences of cyclones and associated impacts such as the vulnerability of many fish stocks and disruption of fish food like planktons are attributed to climate change by marine scientists. Loss of working days coupled with the depletion of resources has spelled doom for the livelihood of resource-poor fishers in Kerala. A drastic drop in the availability of the Indian oil sardine has further deepened their trouble. Loss of fishing days in a recent research article Changing Status of Tropical Cyclones Over the North Indian Ocean published in the journal Climate Dynamics, a group of scientists observes that the frequency, intensity and duration of cyclonic storms have increased in the Indian Ocean. According to them, the frequency of cyclones has increased by 52% in the Arabian Sea (during 2001-2019) and that of very severe cyclones has risen by 150%.

While the intensity of the cyclones increased in the region by about 20% to 40%, the duration of very severe cyclones is up by 260% in the Arabian Sea, says this study. "The sea surface

temperature (SST) has increased by 1.2 degrees to 1.4 degrees for the past century. The surface temperature in the Arabian Sea sometimes rose to 31?C-32? C which is 28?C-29?C normally," says Roxy Mathew Koll, Climate Scientist with Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and one of the authors of this study. Rapid warming of the sea and associated impacts, including cyclonic storms, adversely affect the fishing calendar days. With a substantial increase in alerts on cyclones or extreme weather conditions followed by Cyclone Ockhi in 2017, the number of fishing days has drastically come down, impacting the livelihood of fishermen. Annual marine fish landing estimates of the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi shows Kerala experienced a fall of 46% in the number of fishing days in 2017 compared to the previous year due to Cyclone Ockhi. Some scientists call the phenomena 'weather shocks' which according to them have adverse effects on marine environment. "Change in ocean ecosystem following a series of climatic issues directly affect the small pelagic resources such as oil sardine," says Grinson George, marine scientist and Senior Programme Specialist of the SAARC Agriculture Centre, Dhaka, Bangladesh. According to George, who works on climate-related aspects in fisheries and aquaculture in South Asian region, weather shocks and associated developments in the waters influence the distribution pattern, life cycle, behavioural changes, migration pattern and reproduction of the fish stocks. Vulnerability of fish to climate change Another study by Koll signals the reduction of primary productivity such as phytoplankton in the waters owing to rapid warming over the tropical Indian Ocean.

The study, published in the Geophysical Research Letter, finds that "enhanced ocean stratification due to the rapid warming of the waters suppresses nutrient mixing from subsurface layers", which affects fish resources. Rapid warming of the Indian Ocean may potentially turn this biologically productive region into an ecological desert, the study warns. ICAR-CMFRI's vulnerability assessment of Indian marine fishes to climate change also shows that ocean temperature, current speed, direction and chlorophyll have an influence on the biology of fishes. According to this study, 30% of fish species are vulnerable to climate change along the south-west coast (Kerala, Karnataka and Goa). "Large magnitude of changes in ocean temperature is expected by 2055 affecting the highly vulnerable species. These would influence changes in distribution and species composition. Our study finds that fishes which lead complex lifecycle, high exploitation and low adaptive capacity are prone to climate change," remarks P. U. Zacharia, Principal Investigator of this study. Drop in sardine catch deepens trouble the very familiar common name "kudumbam pularthi" (family provider or family caretaker) of oil sardine among the fishing community, implies the economic significance of the species in Kerala. The decrease in the availability of oil sardine is hitting the economic stability of coastal communities. In a recent study, the ICAR-CMFRI points out that oil sardine resource in Kerala waters is severely affected by climate change related disruptions.

After a record harvest of nearly 4 lakh (400,000) tonnes in 2012, catch of oil sardine is on a

declining trend in Kerala every year. For the last five years, there has been a sharp decline of oil sardine along the coast of the state. The fish registered a slight increase in 2017, but continued to slide during the following years. In 2019, the catch of sardine was just 44,320 tonnes and the yield again dropped to one-third the following year. E. M. Abdussamad, Principal Scientist at CMFRI who works on oil sardine says, "The unfavourable conditions in the ocean ecosystem following El Nino seriously influence the growth and reproduction of oil sardine resources in Kerala." The fish landing data throws light on the disquieting condition of Kerala's active fishermen, out of which 68% fall under BPL (Below Poverty Line) category, according to the latest census report. Normally, sardine harvest fetches good income to the traditional fishers during the monsoon period and a decline of this reousrce alone can trouble their economic safety.

Substantiating this view, another CMFRI study reveal that following the reduction in oil sardine landings, the average net returns of Kerala's outboard fishermen using ring seine experienced a sharp decline from Rs. 12,000 per fishing trip to Rs. 2500 during the period from 2014 to 2018. The period saw a drop of the sardine catch from 2.5 lakh (250,000) tonnes to 77,000 tonnes. Fishermen in this category lost 50% of fishing efforts due to lesser availability of sardine, according to the study. Social and economic catastrophe Charles George, an activist and the president of the Malsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi (Fishermen Unity Forum) calls the situation a "social and economic catastrophe," adding that the traditional fishing community in Kerala that is already marginalised socially and economically, is reeling under the impact of the climate-induced crisis. "Income of fishermen in the state, who depend on fishing for their daily needs, has drastically reduced over the past three years. People are forced to flee from fishing and find some other livelihood options to support their families," he says. He further demands that a fish famine package be allowed to compensate their economic loss due to climate change and "fish drought".

Responding to a query on awareness of climate change, Basheer T.K. a fisherman from Tanur in Kerala's Malappuram district says that climate change is a reality. "We are aware of this through our continuous interaction with the sea. According to our indigenous traditional knowledge we can see the sea has changed a lot. We could feel warming of the waters upon our venture into the sea. There have been drastic changes in ocean current and we could sense changes in the fish habitats," he says. We used to venture into the sea by picking up certain signs from the sea, wind, clouds, etc. But climate change has disrupted this way of fishing too, he adds. Coastal lives in peril Storm surge, high waves, sea erosion and extreme weather conditions have put the lives of Kerala's coastal people in danger. Many coastal villages like Chellanam in Ernakulam district, Vizhinjam and Poonthura in Thiruvananthapuram district are increasingly becoming vulnerable to sea erosion which leaves many fisher families homeless more often. In May this year, hundreds of people residing in the coastal village of Chellanam were impacted when Cyclone Tauktae struck. Houses collapsed and a vast area along the coast,

which extends to about 15 km, was flooded following storm waves.

According to Sebastian D.S., a fisherman residing at Chellanam, the sea is encroaching into their land each year. “This year the sea erosion is severe after the Cyclone Tauktae”, he says. Livelihood issues apart, such incidents are posing threat to their life and coastal assets, putting their lives at peril. At the same time, marine experts are of the view that storm surge will occur more frequently in the coming years. According to them, alarming winds by the cyclones help form storm surge in the waters which results in high waves, sea erosion and flooding in the coastal hamlet. Safety issues Another lurking issue faced by the fishers is the lack of proper ‘social safety nets’ such as insurance coverage in the sector. A 2017 study carried out by Shinoj Parappurathu, Senior Scientist at CMFRI, Kochi shows that though accident risks of fishermen are covered, other risks such as vessel loss or damage and loss of other coastal assets due to natural disasters are covered only at a limited scale in India.

“If suitable insurance schemes were available, the lives of the coastal people would not have become this pathetic. Their only livelihood option is at stake owing to climate change and related fallouts”, says Parappurathu. He further states that the fishermen need to be equipped with on-board safety equipment to ensure disaster-proofing. Lack of advance warning system and means for two-way communication exacerbate the risk involved. Fishermen are pushed to bear the brunt of the natural calamity in the light that only 4.25% of fisher families have GPS and 0.67% use wireless communication.ICAR-CMFRI is working for assessing the vulnerability of the marine fisheries sector in the future,” says A. Gopalakrishnan, Director of ICAR-CMFRI.

“The institute has come up with a slew of adaptation strategies that include adoption of climate-friendly technologies or green practices, assurance of capacity building to make fishers climate-smart, development of knowledge base for climate change and marine fisheries and promotion of coastal aquaculture or cage fish farming. This is an outcome of a recent research project Impacts, Vulnerabilities and Adaptation Strategies for Marine Fisheries in India with the support of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The predicted scenarios in different radiative changes will help the policy planners to go ahead with suitable plans to tide over the uncertainties,” he remarks.

Kerala: Cage fish farming is bringing in rich profit for Kerala self-help group

https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/cage-fish-farming-is-bringing-in-rich-profit-for-

kerala-dalit-self-help-group-547180.html

"In the midst of struggles of making a living due to the COVID lockdown, cage fishing is proving to be a boon for the Dalit fish farmers in the Ernakulam district of Kerala, as per The New Indian Express. Puzhayoram, a Dalit self-help group in Maradu harvested 600 kg of pearl spot from a 4x4m square-sized cage fish. This happened in the Maradu-Nettoor backwaters. "The harvested fish was completely sold out on the spot itself and the self-help group reaped a profit of Rs 2,73,000 from the 10-month farming that was launched in October last year by stocking 2000 seeds of pearl spot," said CMFRI principal scientist K Madhu. "The Covid situation and lockdown had a cascading effect on the lives of the families in the region. The cage farming venture has helped them sustain their livelihood to a certain extent," he added. Cage farming Cage farming was part of a special programme provided under the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). Marad Municipality Vice-chairperson Reshmi Sanil inaugurated the harvesting.

Kerala: Munambam police register its migrant workers

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/munambam-police-register-its-migrant-workers/articleshow/85308698.cms

"The Munambam Janamaithri Police Station has achieved an ambitious task of registering almost all the migrant workers employed in their area and issuing them an easy identification card within two days' time. The unique initiative of labour data collection found out that a total of 4207 migrant workers from 11 states are working in Munambam. The maximum number of workers, 2,472, are from Tamil Nadu, while 1,232 are from West Bengal. A total of 342 workers are from Orissa, while 79 came from Andhra Pradesh and 70 from Assam. From states like Jharkhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi, 10 each came. When the fishing sector resumed operations after the ban on trawling, the police stepped in to gather information in the wake of past experiences of an influx of out-of-state workers seeking employment in the cape area, said CPO TS Subeesh and ASI T,S Siju who co-ordinated the Janamitri police operation.

"Compared to other police stations, Munambam's migrant workers are predominantly employed in fishing sector – either working on a boat or in the harbour or ice plants. We have registered all those working in this sector within two days' time. Now we have barely 50 workers to be registered, who are working in the hospitality industry, mainly in resorts and hotels. That will be completed by August 31st," said ASI T S Siju. "We had convened a meeting of the employers in the fishing sector seeking their co-operation in this. Each data sheet had detailed information of the worker, along with a copy of his Aadhaar card and a photograph. When they registered with us, we issued an identification card in return to each of them," Siju said. The data collected included name, address, phone number of the worker and

details of the employer. It also had home address and the name and phone number of a relative of the migrant worker in his home state. And the data came extremely helpful when Jogesh Das from Bengal died at a hospital.

Preparing the documents for repatriation of the body was swiftly done. “Next year, we will be using online data collection method. Employers will be able to fill in online forms and when the workers arrive, we could verify the information and could issue passes,” Siju said. The whole project was supported by District Police Chief (Ernakulam Rural) K Karthik, Munambam DySP R Baijukumar and SHO AL Yesudas. The data collection activities were supervised by SI K S Shyamkumar.

Kerala: Fisherwomen land in deep waters

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-women-fish-vendors-basket-of-woes-brims-over/article35885303.ece

"COVID-19 related curbs, difficulty in commuting, and arrival of sophisticated supply chains and apps during the pandemic have made life difficult for women engaged in fish vending across the State. While incidents of police brutality and ill-treatment by protocol enforcers are on the rise, the women say they are aghast at the lukewarm response of the government that considers safety of women a priority. “I have been selling fish for the past 35 years and life has never been so difficult. We are scared to sit at our usual spots and many times a day we are forced to run from one place to another with the heavy basket. These days we get panic attacks seeing government vehicles and we wonder if fish vending is an illegal affair,” says Mercy, a fisherwoman. She has lost several customers of late as people got accustomed to online purchases and home deliveries during the lockdown. “Most days we arrive late or are forced to conduct sales at different points due to the ever-changing norms.”

According to them, the recent incident at Attingal involving an elderly vendor is not a stray episode. “They say another incident at Paripally is fabricated, but in Attingal you all saw the woman begging the municipal employees not to take away her merchandise. Fisherwomen have been facing this issue at many places and the authorities keep supporting and justifying the perpetrators,” says Mable Rymond, president, Theeradesha Mahilavedi. With Matsyafed stopping its special bus service to fish landing centres, women are struggling to carry out sales at many places. “Arranging transportation and hiring vehicles to get the catch from harbours have added to our miseries,” she says. The women say that while the authorities mostly ignore other street vendors, they target fisherwomen. “At Attingal you saw the municipal employees taking the fish to the garbage van and the chairperson arguing for them. Our men risk their lives venturing into the sea in this weather and they simply throw it to the garbage heap.

It's our livelihood and seeing that broke our hearts,” says Mercy. Jenet Cleetus,

Thrivananthapuram district secretary of the Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation, says these incidents can be part of a larger conspiracy to help branded supply chains. “When these incidents continue the women will be forced to go in search of other options. They want to get rid of fisherwomen so that these suppliers will have a monopoly and it may be the reason for this open abuse of power. These women have been selling fish in the same area for decades. The authorities are now trying to kick them out exploiting the COVID-19 situation. They used a similar tactic to evict us from our homes in the name of blue economy. We have decided to launch strong agitations if these atrocities continue,” she adds.

Kerala: SIFFS designs biotoilets for fishing boats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/siffs-designs-biotoilets-for-fishing-boats/article35859662.ece

"The South Indian Federation of Fishermen Societies (SIFFS) has designed a biotoilet for small fishing boats which could go a long way towards improving the on-board living conditions of the crew. Absence of toilets on board the boats and the need for creating awareness on the issue prompted the Thiruvananthapuram-based SIFFS to design the biotoilets. The SIFFS biotoilet, designed for a 37-foot, fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) model boat, consists of a European closet with flush tank, hand shower and wash basin plus a 500-litre biodigester. All this is enclosed within a 4 ft x 3ft cabin. The cabin size can be further reduced if space constraints demand it, said J. Vincent Jain, Deputy Chief Executive and head, SIFFS Boatyards. The eco-friendly facility also has solar-powered lamps. The biodigester technology enables at-source treatment of the waste matter. The bio-toilet converts septage into water and gas with the help of anaerobic bacteria. It eliminates the direct discharge of septage into the sea. SIFFS chief executive X. Joseph wanted to promote the concept in fishing boats. Mr. Jain said that the biotoilets offers a healthy option for fishermen. “"Right now, none of the boats is fitted with toilets. A 37-footer carries a crew of between five and seven men and stays out at sea for several days,"' he said. A 37-foot FRP boat costs ?8 lakh. A basic-model biotoilet with Indian-type closet can be fitted aboard it for ?75,000. In a bid to popularise the concept, a prototype has been installed at the SIFFS boatyard at Veli so that fishermen, boat owners and government representatives can try it out. Earlier this week, SIFFS also organised a presentation on the concept before the Fisheries Department, Puducherry. These biotoilets are also ideal for commercial establishments, hospitals and houseboats, according to SIFFS.

Kerala: Fishermen steer through rough waters

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fishermen-steer-through-rough-waters/articleshow/85220963.cms

"The trawling ban, which was lifted a week ago, is yet to bring in any large landings for

most vessels which had gone for multi-day fishing. While, the first two days saw many boats returning with catches of threadfin breams, shrimps, tunas, the landing prices have dampened the spirit of many fishermen. “Due to Covid, there is no major business at the landing centres. Middlemen are buying in bulk. All small fish are going to fishmeal companies and the rest are going to market. They are buying at low amounts and selling it at high rates in the market,” said Anthony Kurishinkal, a fisherman. He said there were hardly any sardines in the landings. “We got mackerels which were sold at Rs 150-200 in the market, but were brought from fishermen at Rs 40,” he added. Most fishermen say that the auction system which was proposed by the state government last year is not functioning. There must have been less than 20 fishing days till August. With frequent weather warnings and advisories against fishing boats venturing into sea on many days, the community has been seeking a more localized weather system which would give specific warnings instead of generalized ones.

The sector is completely down and since the catch is poor, we are unable to manage the financial burden of the vessels. Also, there is no good catch. Most of the mackerels that were caught were juveniles or equivalent. Normally, by this time, we get full adult fish,” said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, president, all Kerala boat operators’ association. Organizations like Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Union have put proposals like boats taking turns to go into the sea so that everybody gets an income. The government had earlier proposed an auction system that fixed the rate of the fish based on the existing market price of the day or week. This had worked out well in the fish landing centres in Ernakulam which were monitored by a joint team of Matsyafed officials, fisheries department and harbour management committee. But it has also proved futile with allegations that the middlemen were pushing boats to go into sea and most of this was being directed to fishmeal companies rather than to the markets which are now flooded with fish brought from other states.

Kerala: 11,685 families reside within 50m of shoreline

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/11685-families-reside-within-50m-of-shoreline/articleshow/85222734.cms

"There are as many as 11,685 families residing within 50 metres from the shoreline along the state’s coast, fisheries, culture and youth affairs minister Saji Cherian said in the assembly on Tuesday. Replying to a submission by opposition leader V D Satheesan demanding redesigning the ongoing Punargeham project to relocate such families from the coastline, the minister said that according to a survey, there are 11,685 families within 50m of shoreline. Of

them, 3,367 families are residing within 10m, 3,921 within 10-20m, 4,577 within 20-30m and 6,820 within 30-50m.

He said that of these families, 7,192 have agreed to relocate under the scheme. He said that the project aims at providing Rs 10 lakh for such families, of which Rs 6 lakh will be for purchasing land (two cents if in municipal or corporation limits and three cents if in rural areas) and the rest is for construction of a house. As much as Rs 2,450 crore has been earmarked for the project, of which Rs 1,398 crore is from the chief minister's distress relief fund, while Rs 1,052 crore is from the budget of the fisheries department. He said that land has been located for 2,275 families while 1,630 families have got their land registered and 428 houses have been completed. Meanwhile, the opposition leader said that the figures being cited by the minister were not true to the facts. He said that the project needs a complete overhauling as the conditions laid out in the scheme are completely impractical. He said that the condition that they have to surrender their existing land and house to get relocated is unjustified. "Why would someone who has, for example, 15 cents and a house surrender it to the government to get three cents of land, that too which they may not be able to purchase with the money offered by the government?" he asked. Also, he slammed another clause that they should complete the construction work of the new house within 12 months, failing which they will have to repay an interest of 18%. "Even the government will not be able to construct it within this period and they are asked to pay this huge interest. Is the government playing the role of a private moneylender?" Satheesan said.

Kerala: Enrica Lexie case: HC to decide on mode of disbursal of compensation to kin of victims

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/aug/10/enrica-lexie-case-hc-to-decide-on-mode-of-disbursal-of-compensation-to-kin-of-victims-2342860.html

"The Kerala High Court adjourned to Thursday the matter to decide the mode of disbursal of the compensation to the legal heirs of the victims in the Enrica Lexie case. Two fishermen -- Valentine alias Jelestine and Ajesh Pink -- on board the boat St Antony were shot dead by Sergeants Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre of the Italian marines in February 2012. The Supreme Court had quashed the criminal case against the Italian marines after accepting the compensation of Rs 10 crore deposited by Italy. The SC had asked the Chief Justice of the Kerala High Court to appoint a judge to issue a disbursement order that protects the interests of the heirs and ensures that they receive it. It directed that the sum of Rs 10 crores, which was deposited with the Supreme Court Registry, be transferred to the High Court of Kerala. The SC directed to disburse Rs 4 crores to the dependents of each deceased and Rs 2 crores to the owner of the boat St. Antony.

The Supreme Court order stated that the state of Kerala as well as the heirs of the deceased

fishermen and even the owner of the boat which was damaged have agreed to accept the award and even the Union of India had also accepted the award passed by the Arbitral Tribunal. The SC also held that the appropriate order of disbursement/investment be passed after hearing the heirs of each deceased, protecting their best interests. The remaining amount of Rs 2 crores will be paid to the owner of the boat by an account payee cheque. When the case came up for hearing, advocate M Ajay submitted that Aguna Xavier and Abhinaya Xavier, the two sisters of deceased 20-year-old Ajeesh Pink, filed an affidavit before the court. The affidavit stated that their father and mother had died and they are the surviving legal heirs. Doramma, who is the legal representative of Valentine, is also a respondent in the proceedings before the High Court. The court will also take steps to make Freddy a respondent in the case. Advocate Yash Thomas Mannully, who is representing the injured fishermen, submitted that seven fishermen who were on board the fishing boat have approached the Supreme Court seeking compensation out of the Rs 2 crore granted to the owner of the boat. The petition is pending. They also sought permission to implead in the case.

Kerala: Fishing community in sea of despair

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/aug/09/fishing-community-in-sea-of-despair-2342118.html

"A week after fishing activities resumed in the state after the 52-day-long monsoon trawl ban, the festive cheer in harbours is missing and the fishing community continues to struggle in the sea of despair. Low catch due to dwindling marine resources, high operations cost, disruption of market due to Covid situation and tumbling prices have added to the woes of the fishing community. Though mechanised fishing activities resumed in the state on July 31 midnight, around 50 per cent of fishing boats are yet to venture into the sea as the owners are unable to complete the repair work of the vessels due to financial distress. Only a few vessels that resumed fishing activities have returned with good catch. But the prices started stumbling after the initial days due to low demand. “The boats are getting threadfin bream, small shrimp and anchovy. But the size of the species is very small. The auction price of small shrimp started at Rs 80 per kg and has plunged to Rs 25. Threadfin bream gets Rs 85 per kg. Surprisingly, cuttlefish and sardines have disappeared. The deep sea fishing vessels will be returning only next week and we hope they get some good catch,” said All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association vice-president Paul Rajan.

Though the fishing activities have resumed, most of the shrimp peeling units are yet to open due to lockdown restrictions. Meanwhile, many workers who were previously employed in the sector have joined employment guarantee scheme as the peeling units remained shut for more than a year which affected their livelihood. Most of the processing units have been holding stock for the past few months due to lack of demand in the export sector. The ban imposed by

China on 37 export firms alleging Covid contamination of packing material has added to the woes of the exporters. All these factors have a cascading effect on the fishing sector. Another issue is exploitation by middlemen. The traders have been charging 13 per cent brokerage for sale of fish and recently hiked the share to 16 per cent. As the boat owners refused to pay the increased amount, the traders refused to procure the fish for two days. The boat owners had to sell the catch at a cheaper rate to fishmeal factories in Mangaluru.

Later the traders deferred the decision for two weeks. The fishing boat operators association has submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister seeking to end the exploitation by traders. “The traders purchase the shrimp for Rs 25 from us and sell it in the market for Rs 140. The people who toil fighting the elements are not getting a fair price. The government should intervene and end this exploitation. The price of diesel has gone up by Rs 30 in a year and the expense of a day-long fishing expedition has crossed Rs 1 lakh. The operational cost is rising and rarely do we get some profit,” said association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurakal. Meanwhile fishermen said that many species have migrated from Kerala coast due to climate change. While the volume of catch in Kerala has dropped drastically, there is an increase in landing in Tamil Nadu. A study by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) last year had found migration of oil sardine species to Tamil Nadu coast. “There has been a decrease in the size of various fish species in Kerala coast during recent years. This could be an adverse effect of climate change. There is a need for a study on the impact of climate change on fish species in the west coast,” said scientist and CMFRI demersal fisheries division head P U Zacharia.

Kerala: Chinese gadgets in trawlers trigger a set of issues

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/chinese-gadgets-in-fishing-vessels-trigger-a-set-of-problems/article35785932.ece

"With the monsoon fishing season in full swing, vessels using China-made Automatic Identification System (AIS) devices continue to create confusion among maritime law enforcement agencies. Despite the government providing transponders at subsidised rates, trawlers from various harbours in Kerala have been venturing into the sea with cheap Chinese gadgets that cause multiple issues concerning coastal security. Recently, the Intelligence and the Coast Guard flagged the problem as these craft transmit the wrong country code, identifying themselves as Chinese vessels. “The issue was raised at a coastal security meeting as these craft mislead our agencies. It’s not possible to monitor from the coast these vessels which generate another set of problems that include illegal fishing,” says a fisheries official.

Motive Reportedly, large trawlers fishing off the Kerala coast opt for Chinese substitutes as they help them hide the location of their fishing grounds. Often, trawlers do not want to share areas where marine wealth is abundant, fishing grounds that offer a good and steady harvest. “The vessels that use government-provided device can be monitored from the control room on the coast. They are opting for the Chinese system so that they can protect the set of coordinates. They source the device from boat-building yards and agents,” he adds. Glitches The use of these gadget also creates glitches when it comes to enforcement and tracing of illegal fishing activities. “We cannot get accurate location of these vessels and find violations. If the trawlers fish in less than 20 m deep waters, it is illegal, but these devices can trick us. If they use the proper system, it will be easy for us to coordinate with the Navy or Coast Guard during rescue operations and solve the confusion related to catch certificates,” says the official.

According to the Coast Guard, these trawlers relaying wrong country codes and navigation-related information also pose a serious threat to national security. The claim about opting for the Chinese device due to its low price is baseless, says an official. “The vessel monitoring system offered by the government costs around ?1 lakh, but they can get it at ?26,000 after subsidy. Just like the AIS, this system also helps them to track nearby vessels and avoid mid-sea collisions. The amount is not unaffordable for huge trawlers worth ?1 crore to ?1.5 crore that remain anchored in the sea for days,” says the official.

Kerala: What does it take to save India’s largest lake?

https://www.outlookindia.com/outlooktraveller/explore/story/71477/what-does-it-take-to-save-indias-largest-lake

"I was born in a traditional fishing community by Vembanad Lake — a wetland system that connects 1.6 million lives across three districts of Kerala. My earliest childhood memories are those of sitting by the lakeside near my home and dropping the net in it to catch fish, different varieties of those like Malabar Labeo, Pearl Spot, Giant Danio, Anchovy. I must’ve been 8 or 10 years old then. It was the time when the lake was home to over 150 species of fish. Even as a child, I was aware of the challenges that the fishermen in my community faced to make ends meet. Over the years, I have witnessed numerous changes that have caused a sharp decline in the fish wealth in the lake and in turn multiplied the problems of the fishermen here. How did the fish population decline? There are many factors that contributed to the impoverishment of the Vembanad Lake ecosystem. One of the major factors was the construction of Thanneermukkom Bund (Thannermukkom Salt Water Barrier) in 1975 across the Vembanad Lake to prevent flow of salt water from the tidal waves of the Arabian Sea into

the low lands of the Kuttanad region and help paddy cultivation that needs fresh water. This barrier divided the 36000 hectares lake into two parts – the northern part with salty water all through the year.

Before the barrier was commissioned, 429 tons of prawns were obtained from the lake as per the government records. A year later, prawns obtained from the lake reduced by 27 tons. Studies revealed that this decline was a result of reduced salinity in water in the southern part of the lake. Prawns need salty water for breeding. Same was the case with clams. A clam lays about 5 lakhs eggs, but salty water is needed to facilitate hatching of those eggs. The low salinity in parts of the lake caused prawns and clams production to fall drastically in this region. The varieties of shrimp that used to come from the sea into the lake water — Indian white prawn, tiger, kadal – reduced too. Crabs became difficult to obtain in the lake. Half of the 150 species have been wiped out since the barrage was built and it has resulted in losses amounting to hundreds of crores to the local fisherfolk as well as the government. The Green Revolution that commenced in 1965 in India was another factor that adversely impacted the marine life of Vembanad Lake. Excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers to protect grain crops and increase crop production in parts of land, which were originally occupied by the lake and were later reclaimed for agricultural purposes, resulted in polluting the water of the lake and the disappearance of fish species from the lake.

Moreover, the consumption of fish from the pesticide-laden water caused health hazards. The growth of the industrial sector, especially the industries along the banks of the Periyar river that flows into the Vembanad lake, caused industrial waste to trickle into the lake. Increased tourism brought more boats than the lake could carry. All these factors led to polluting of the lake water, shrinking the size of the lake, decimating the fish stock and eventually impacting the livelihoods of the local fishermen. A few shrewd, money-minded individuals from our own community, who were not mindful of their impact on the environment started encroaching upon the lake, over-farming the fish and even used pesticides. Those who didn't participate in any of this had to suffer as well. Forced to sit in a corner and cast their nets within a limited area, eventually, they too started adopting new methods to catch more fish and save their own livelihoods, making matters a lot worse. They replaced old ecofriendly nets with nylon nets of different types with the smallest mesh size to catch more fish, including juvenile fish. Earlier, they caught large clams, but due to the lack of availability, they started catching small clams as well. If you catch a clam when it is 6 months old, it does not have reproductive capacity. So, reproduction of clams stopped and clam catches fell. Moreover, fisherfolks had not left a single spot of the lake untouched.

They caught fish everywhere in the lake. Fishing in the areas of the lake where fish breed and lay eggs resulted in destroying eggs and hatchlings, causing further depletion of fish stock. To address these ever-increasing problems, K V Dayal, a pioneering environmentalist in Kerala,

established the Vembanad Nature Club in 1986 in Muhamma village and started organizing various initiatives and activities for the conservation of Vembanad Lake. He formed a lake protection group in my area along with my uncle, Ashokan. It was under K V Dayal's guidance and with his personal funds that the first Matsyathavalam (fish sanctuary or fish shelter) was established in Vembanad Lake. In 2007, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE) started working together with the local fishing communities and institutions to address the conservation issues faced by Vembanad Lake. Influenced by the work of such institutions and determined to make a difference, I joined Vembanad Kayal Samrakshana Samiti or the Lake Protection Forum (LPF) at a young age. LPFs use traditional ecological knowledge to govern and manage fishery resources. They study the challenges of the fishing community, come up with localized solutions, find people who are interested in supporting initiatives, and work with them to bring about real change.

I started participating in LPF initiatives such as organizing awareness programs for fisherfolks, general public and government officials to explain how fish and clams are produced, the adverse impact of overfishing and need for protecting them. I also started participating in conducting fish counts, monitoring water quality (Jaladarpanam), organizing meetings to discuss issues on Vembanad Lake, and conducting various campaigns for cleaning and safeguarding the lake. To prevent the problems associated with overfishing, we started building fish sanctuaries by using the traditional paddal system – using bamboo fencing and branches of cashew and mango trees. These sanctuaries were declared no-fishing zones to help fish breed and LPF members took turns to keep vigil. Today, through the continuous combined efforts of organizations such as ATREE and Cherish Expeditions, local bodies such as Lake Protection Forum, and also some foreign student groups, we have been able to raise funds and establish 30 fish sanctuaries. The evaluation of these sanctuaries by fishery experts has shown an increase in the fish stocks, especially pearl spot, clams and other small fish. We have also managed to get government participation in the effort – the government has now established 14 fish sanctuaries over an area of two hectares. In addition, five Panchayats manage five sanctuaries. The fishing communities have realized that these sanctuaries would make it possible to improve their lives and livelihoods.

When some fishermen went to catch fish in the sanctuaries, they were forced to retreat by the other fishermen – "Don't cast nets there, that's the fish sanctuary there, that's the spot where pearl spot fish have laid eggs, therefore, don't do it," they said. Fish sanctuaries have thus managed to curb the rampant overfishing by fisherfolk. They also act as artificial mangroves that protect us from floods. Think about it, apart from stabilising the traditional livelihoods of the fisherfolk here, in time, these fish sanctuaries, if left alone, will also help other people in the region by making clean fish available and affordable to them. In fact, even if these sanctuaries cannot be expanded later to other areas of the Vembanad Lake, south of the Thanneermukkom Bund, it's wonderful that they are already impacting the lives of thousands of people, including

the local fishing families. But I believe the biggest achievement has been that these sanctuaries have raised awareness about sustainable fishing within a community that was once exploiting the lake without sparing a thought for the future. Changing habits can take time. But without changing our habits permanently, how can we expect real change to happen?

Kerala: Muthalapozhy a deathtrap for fishers: Opposition

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/muthalapozhy-a-deathtrap-for-fishers-opposition/article35747647.ece

"The Opposition told the Assembly on Thursday that the Adani Group's failure to prevent silting by periodical dredging had turned the harbour mouth at Muthalapozhy into a deathtrap for traditional seafaring fishers. Moving an adjournment notice to discuss the issue, Congress legislator M. Vincent said the State government had unabashedly covered up for the Adani Group's failure in a statement to the Centre. The whitewash had cost the lives of 60 fishers so far, he said. (The government had contracted the Adani Group to construct the Vizhinjam shipping terminal.) Leader of the Opposition V.D. Satheesan said Adani's breakwater construction had upset the seasonal back-and-forth shifting of silt at Vizhinjam and Muthalapozhy. The company was locked in a dispute with the Harbour Engineering Department over who should regularly desilt the harbour mouth to maintain a safe passage for fishing boats through the seasons. Mr. Satheesan said silting had drastically reduced the depth of the harbour mouth. The underwater sandbar caused strong conflicting currents and powerful eddies that sucked fishing boats into their vortex. Quoting Fisheries Department figures, Mr. Satheesan said over 60 fishers had died. Many more had suffered debilitating injuries after their boats capsized. Lakhs of rupees worth of fishing equipment and boats were destroyed in the accidents.

However, neither the government nor the harbour contractor had moved a little finger to mitigate the danger. Scores of fisherfolk families had lost their breadwinners. Their survivors had no choice but to put to sea again, knowing their chance of making a safe landfall was thin. Mr. Satheesan said Kerala singularly lacked a marine rescue system despite a 550-km-long coastline. The police and Fisheries Department rescue boats existed only on paper. They had no crew, marine rescue experts or fuel. Mr. Satheesan said the government should institute a permanent dredging system to prevent harbour mouths from silting up. Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian said the Opposition had exaggerated the number of fishing accidents at Muthalapozhy. He said the Adani Group had resumed dredging. The administration would create a safe and deep waterway for boats. Speaker M. B. Rajesh rejected the adjournment notice.

Kerala: Peoples panels to help convince fishers on housing scheme

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/peoples-panels-to-help-convince-fishers-

on-housing-scheme/article35719966.ece

"With sea erosion on the rise and fisher families increasingly reluctant to relocate to safer locations, the Fisheries Department has decided to form new people's committees, with the help of local bodies, under the 'Punargeham' project to speed up its implementation. In the first phase, the new committees will come up on in Beypore and Kadalundi coastal areas. Under the project, a family will be given ?10 lakh in various stages to purchase three cents of land away from the coast and build a 600-sq ft house. Though it was launched years go, less than 25% of the eligible families have cooperated with its implementation. Most are not keen on accepting the package as such. The responsibility of the new committee will be to identify such families and prompt them to cooperate with the project. In Kozhikode district, 2,606 families have been identified as requiring speedy rehabilitation. Of this, less than 600 families have accepted the package. Many say the package does not meet their actual requirements. Most coastal families are big and they are not ready to shift to a smaller house.

They say that a sum of ?10 lakh will not suffice to purchase land and build a house in the existing market rate. They are calling for a major revision in the package. The distance factor Another major reason for the opposition is the possible distance of the new properties from the coastal area. Most fisher families want a living space closer to the harbours and fish landing centres as it would reduce their travel time. Their affinity for the coastal area too is preventing many from accepting the offer. Unused revenue land The Fisheries Department officials have made it clear that fisher families living close to vulnerable coastal areas will have to shift on account of their safety. Efforts are also on to identify unused revenue land in the urban area for the purpose of their rehabilitation.

Kerala: Fishers doubtful over efficacy of Karunya marine ambulance

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/fishers-doubtful-over-efficacy-of-karunya-marine-ambulance/article35729816.ece

"Fishermen and boat owners at the Beypore harbour have expressed strong concern over the efficacy of the newly launched Karunya marine ambulance for sea rescue operations. Those who recently took up the matter with the district administration and the Fisheries Department alleged that the multi-crore customised boat was of no use during rough weather, and that it could hardly withstand the strong rolling motions in the sea. Highlighting the limitations of sea ambulance in rescue operations, All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners and Operators Association called for the hiring of a well-equipped larger fishing boat for the purpose. According to them, the small marine ambulance with all its limitations and small size will never be a wise choice to depend on during crisis situations. Association leaders said bigger boats alone could effectively withstand rough waves and the rolling motion during unfair weather. A small boat like Karunya with a length of just 22.5 metres can never be used for rescue operations in the rough seas,

which will even endanger the life of rescue operators, they argued.During the trawling ban, the Fisheries Department and the district administration were reluctant to hire fishing boats for rescue operations citing availability of the ambulance.

In effect, dependence on an ineffective rescue boat cripples rescue services," said association vice president Karichal Preman. He added that those who were associated with rescue operations had encountered problems while using the boat. It was nearly six months ago that the ?6-crore customised boat was brought from Kochi to Beypore. It was also claimed that the boat was designed to cover the entire Malabar coast. In addition, nursing staff were deployed on the boat on contract, besides equipping it with rescue accessories to attend to 10 persons at a time. Some fishermen from Beypore said the customised boat was used for coastal patrol recently and stressed the need to use it for productive purposes. According to them, two boats launched to cover the southern coast had a similar fate.

Kerala: Fishing boat capsizes in Muthalapozhi

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/fishing-boat-capsizes-in-muthalapozhi/article35712935.ece

"A fishing boat capsized after colliding with another off Muthalapozhi on Tuesday. All the 23 fishermen managed to escape and were rescued, though some of them sustained minor injuries. The boat that set sail from the harbour around 6 a.m. reportedly lost control after getting caught in the rough waves close to the estuary. This led the boat to collide with another before ramming into a groyne and capsizing.

Kerala: NPSSFW protests police atrocities on women fish vendors

"National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSFW) has been alarmed to receive reports of police atrocities on women fish vendors in Kerala. The police are forcibly driving away poor women fish vendors from street sides, spoiling their fish and damaging their urns and trays. Heavy fine is also being imposed on poor fish vendors. Reports of such incidents have reached NPSSFW from Trivandrum and Paripally. If this is an indicator, many such incidents are in the offing. Kerala has more than 60,000 women fish vendors. This is high time that the Government restrains its law enforcing agencies. The Kerala police must be sensitive to the compulsion of the women fish vendors for livelihood. In these days of pandemic, when the poor people are finding it very difficult to get a job, the women of the poor labouring families are under tremendous pressure to arrange two meals a day for their family members. Any administration sensitive to the plight of the people cannot beat up and drive away poor and helpless women fish vendors who are desperately trying to make an earning. A responsible Government has to provide its people with a living before imposing fines on them for violating

Covid-19 restrictions in quest of livelihood. In view of the above the National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSFW) urge upon you to – 1. Instruct the Kerala Police and all law enforcing agencies in the state to immediately stop all atrocities on the women fish vendors and allow them to continue with their livelihood activities with proper precautions for Covid-19; 2. Book all police officials responsible for atrocities perpetrated upon the poor women fish vendors and compensate the vendors whose fish and implements have been spoiled or damaged. 3. Provide Rs.3,000/- monthly livelihood compensation support to all women fish vendors during Covid-19 lock down period.

Kerala: Hoping an end to woes, boats return: Post-ban fishing

https://www.deshabhimani.com/english/news/kerala/fishing-boats-take-to-sea-after-trawling-ban-in-kerala/4664

"One by one, boats that took off to seas after the trawling ban are trickling into the harbour. The vessels had left shores last Sunday morning when the ban ended. Several families, left penniless from the two total lockdowns since Covid outbreak, have pawned their houses to be able to mend their fishing boats and venture into seas again. Many among them have huge loan burdens at bank. Harbours had opened Sunday in full conformation with Covid protocols. Around 15 – 20 fish workers went by each boat. Scores of families draw their livelihood from fishing related activities such as head load work, ice factories, small traders, packing units, vehicles, drivers etc. The boatsmen stay back at sea fishing for an average of three days, but upon returning, can sell their ware only from dawn 3 to 7am. Also only 35 boats can sell their catch on any given day.

Anyone fishing at seas without permit face punishment. Only those vaccinated or having a valid covid-free certificate can go for fishing or enter the harbour. Main challenges fishing folks grapple with are high fuel costs and foreign trawlers. As other state workers are slow to return, around 70 percent of the boat workers are locals. Meanwhile, the Fisheries Department has instructed formation of committees at all harbours and fit communication systems in each boat taking to the seas.

Kerala: Uninjured fishermen seek a pie from payout

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/uninjured-fishermen-seek-a-pie-from-payout/articleshow/84956350.cms

"Seven uninjured Kerala fishermen, who were on boat St Anthony along with the two

others who were killed by firing from Italian Marines in 2012, have moved the Supreme Court seeking a share in the Rs 2 crore compensation given to the boat owner by the Italian government. On June 15, the SC had brought the curtains down on a nine-year-old criminal proceedings and diplomatic wrangle over trial of two Italian marines for killings of two fishermen off Indian coast in lieu of Rs 10 crore additional compensation paid by Rome and chalked out modalities for handing over the monies to kin of victims. The SC made arrangements for proper investment of the compensation amount - Rs 4 crore each to the kin of deceased fishermen and Rs 2 crore to the owner of boat St Antony - so that the monies are not frittered away. The seven fishermen, who were aboard St Anthony on February 15, 2012 when the Italian Marines had opened fire leading to the two deaths, moved the SC saying they were also entitled to compensation from the money paid to the boat owner as they too suffered trauma even though they narrowly escaped death.

They requested the SC to stop disbursement of the Rs 10 crore compensation till their share in the compensation awarded to the boat owner was determined and quantified. In its June 15 judgment, a bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah had said as per the International Arbitral award, Italy is mandated to commence criminal trial proceedings against the two Marines — Massimilano Latorre and Salvatore Girone — without any loss of time. "... now the Republic of Italy shall resume its criminal investigation in the events of February 15, 2012 and it is further directed that the Union of India, Republic of Italy and the State of Kerala shall cooperate with each other in pursuit of that investigation," it had said. On the compensation of Rs 10 crore paid by Italy over and above Rs 2.17 crore already paid by it to families of victims, the bench said, "We are satisfied that the amount of compensation of Rs 10 crores over and above the ex-gratia amount of compensation already paid to the heirs of the deceased fishermen offered and deposited by the Republic of Italy, ... can be said to be a reasonable amount of compensation and can be said to be in the interest of heirs of the deceased.

We are of the view that this is a fit case to close all the proceedings in India including criminal proceedings in exercise of powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India." The SC had quashed the FIR No.2/2012 of Coastal PS, Neendakara, Kollam, Kerala re-registered as FIR No. R.C. No. 04/2013/NIA/DLI dated 4 April 2013, under Sections 302, 307, 427 read with Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and Section 3 of the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act, 2002 registered by the National Investigation Agency, New Delhi, and all proceedings emanating there from including the proceedings pending before the Ld. Special Designated Court, Patiala House Courts, New Delhi. SC ordered transfer of the amount of Rs 10 crore, deposited in the SC registry by Union of India after receipt of it from Italy, to the Kerala high court and requested the HC chief justice "to nominate a judge to pass appropriate order of disbursement/investment of the amount to be paid to the heirs of each deceased (Rs 4 crore each) so as to protect the interest of the heirs and ensure that the compensation is duly received

by the heirs and not diverted/misappropriated. The order of disbursement/investment be passed after hearing the heirs of each deceased and appropriate order be passed, protecting the best interest of the heirs of each deceased. Remaining amount of Rs 2 crore will be paid to the boat owner by an account payee cheque."

Kerala: Boat owners in Kochi demand govt. intervention to end alleged exploitation by agents

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/boat-owners-in-kochi-demand-govt-intervention-to-end-alleged-exploitation-by-agents/article35660489.ece

"The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association has appealed to the State government to step in and prevent "exploitation" of fishers by fish buyers and agents, who were allegedly demanding up to 16% discount on the auction price of fish landings in harbours even as the annual trawling ban is set to end on the midnight of Saturday. The boat owners alleged that the agents had threatened not to buy the catch if the discount offered on auction price was not hiked to 16%. Association president Peter Mathias and general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal said fish buying agents had demanded that the present "auction discount" of 13% be raised to 16%. The "auction discount" worked against the interest of the fishers, said the boat owners. The practice is that if the catch in a fishing boat that lands at some of the harbours is auctioned for ?100, a discount of ?13 is offered to the wholesale agent. The fish buying agents are now demanding that it be raised to ?16. The rate of discount varies from harbour to harbour.

However, V.A. Nazar of All Kerala Fish Merchants' and Commission Agents' Association said the market situation had changed drastically in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown and financial losses and that the demand for 16% discount was not a new one but one that existed earlier. Fish merchants and agents were in financial difficulty and the demand for the discount was justified, he claimed. He also said that the COVID-19 protocol had disrupted the normal auction process at fish landing centres and harbours. Mr. Kalapurackal said buying agents had said that fish sales could be disrupted from August 1 if the enhanced discount was not implemented and the demand had been made on fish landing centres in Vypeen. He also alleged that fish buyers from outside were not being allowed to purchase from the landing centres and harbours. The fishing boat operators' demand is that the fishing community should be freed from the "exploitation of middlemen" so that the fishers get the true value for their labour. They pointed out that each fishing expedition had turned extremely costly with the price

of diesel going up by about ?28 per litre during the last one year.

The traditional fishers are in no position to bear the fuel price hike. Meanwhile, sources in the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour, one of the largest fish landing centres in the State, pointed out that no demand had been raised for auction discount hike by buyers in the harbour. There are around 200 trawl boats, 800 longliners and gillnet boats, and 65 purseine boats operating from Thoppumpady.

Kerala: State may go for deep sea fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/state-may-go-for-deep-sea-fishing/article35610464.ece

"The State government is exploring the possibility of introducing deep sea fishing as coastal fishing is proving inadequate. Harbours at Sakthikulangara and Azhikkal would be raised to international standards as part of this plan, Minister for Fisheries Saji Cherian said. In his reply to the discussion on demand for grants for transport in the revised budget for the current financial year, the Minister said a project for fish farming in water bodies had been launched recently to double fish production in the State and ensure food security. For the next one year, the target was to increase production by 34,947 tonnes. Cage culture had also been launched in 28 reservoirs. From five crore fishlings in 31 hatcheries, the government was targeting production of 12 crore fishlings in three years to expand fish farming. This would help reduce dependence on other States. Hundred more Matysafed fish marts would be opened in a year. Twenty such stalls would be inaugurated as part of the government's 100-day programme. The Minister said seafood restaurants would be opened in all districts, including in major towns. The first three of the proposed restaurants would be started within two months, he said. Chellanam, he said, had been selected for implementing the model fish village project to address all problems faced by such villages with the convergence of all departments.

The National Institute of Fisheries Administration and Management in Ernakulam would be transformed into a centre of excellence. A modern management system would be implemented in the fisheries sector. This would help professionalise the fishing sector. Stress would be given to responsible fishing, Mr. Cherian said. Hatcheries would be started to improve the State's share in ornamental fish farming, thereby providing lots of jobs. A hatchery would be started in Kannur soon. The Minister said fishers were not using the equipment provided to them to ensure safety. This was necessary to prevent loss of lives. More mechanisms for safety of fishers would be put in place. As part of the Punargeham rehabilitation project, 1,363 flats were under construction in coastal areas. These flats would be ready for handover soon as part of the government's 100-day programme. As many as 2,129 houses were also being built using money given to individuals. As an extension to the e-office mechanism, paperless offices of the

department would be launched at the grassroots level, the Minister said.

Kerala: Over 100 Chellanam families evince interest in rehabilitation project

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/over-100-chellanam-families-evince-interest-in-rehabilitation-project/article35618944.ece

"More than 100 families in the coastal village of Chellanam, suffering from relentless sea erosion and flooding of homes, have expressed interest in being rehabilitated under the 'Punargeham' programme announced by the State government nearly two years ago. Fisheries Department sources said more than 200 families in Ernakulam district had expressed interest in being rehabilitated and relocated in the wake of severe sea incursion. Enquiries from Chellanam, one of the most affected areas, stood around 150, said sources. The Punargeham programme involves relocating families living within 50 metres of the high tide line (HTL) along Kerala coast. The Fisheries Department has sent out a call to owners of land measuring 50 cents, not falling within the Coastal Regulation Zone, for the erection of housing complexes. Department sources said the land would be acquired by the government for constructing the housing complex that would accommodate the families requiring relocation.

The owners of land have been asked to contact the Fisheries Department by August 13 with all documents. Department sources said that only those willing to be rehabilitated would be accommodated under the project and that no one would be forced to relocate. 'Bid to trick people' A spokesman for Chellanam Janakiya Vedhi, a forum demanding measures to protect the coastal village, described the Punargeham programme as an attempt to hoodwink the people. While the government was offering massive incentives to landowners who might have to cede land for the semi-high speed rail corridor, coastal residents were being given very little, he said. Former finance minister Thomas Isaaac had said in his budget speech in January 2021 that a total of 13,018 houses had been built in the coastal areas over the previous five years and that 7,500 houses would be built at an expense of Rs. 300 crore under the LIFE Mission in 2021-22. The aim of the Punargeham programme was to rehabilitate 2,500 coastal families at a cost of about Rs. 250 crore.

Kerala: Vizhinjam port turning into an eco disaster

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/jul/28/vizhinjam-port-turning-into-an-eco-disaster-2336336.html

"The construction of the Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport is fast progressing. With that, the tragedy awaiting the coastline is also fast approaching, say researchers. The continuous dredging activities in Vizhinjam region has led to environmental problems and the rocky reefs which are a habitat for hundreds of marine creatures have been covered with sand and are completely destroyed. This has also led to the loss of livelihood of the fishermen community, especially traditional mussel collectors. Dredging for the sea lane began in 2015 after Vizhinjam International Seaport Limited (VISL) signed a contract with Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Limited for the Rs 7,525-crore project. Due to the nature of the land and rock groups, it is said the area is landslide proof and that negates the need for permanent dredging, thereby making Vizhinjam an ideal location for the construction of a port. However, the experts who have been researching the marine ecology in the area point out that the port construction is not only causing permanent damage to the sea ecosystem but also affecting the marine life and the livelihoods of fishermen. Several studies carried out by volunteers of the city-based Friends of Marine Life (FML) led by chief coordinator Robert Panippilla have found that several of the rocky reefs have already been destroyed due to the dredging activities and other remaining ones are on the verge of destruction.

Experts say that as the oceans absorb the gases that cause global warming, they become more acidic, leading to the loss of marine biodiversity such as the destruction of marine habitats and liquefaction of the coral reefs. Kumar Sahayaraju, a marine biologist involved in documentation of the reefs, says, “Rocky reefs such as ‘Kozhippara Paru’, ‘Madan Paru’, ‘Panavilakode Kallu’, ‘Parayan Kallu’, ‘Neruv Kallu’, ‘Kulathukal Paru’ and ‘Charupara Kallu’ have already been destroyed due to dredging and more than 147 species including mussels and corals have been lost. A 2017 study by the Thiruvananthapuram-based Friends of Marine Life found that such coral reefs are also beginning to be destroyed in the seas off the Inayam region of Kanyakumari.” Kumar says, “Climate change is generally said not to affect the deep sea. However, deep-sea biodiversity largely adapts to stable temperature conditions. Therefore, when the temperature changes due to climate change, the deep-sea biodiversity will no longer be able to adapt to it. The monsoon season is crucial for fishermen and the sea. This is also the time of fish breeding. The currents in the ocean in monsoon contribute to the phenomenon of ‘Karaneerilakkam or upwelling which contributes to marine biodiversity.

However, the fishermen say there was no strong monsoon or Karaneerilakkam after Cyclone Ockhi.” The ocean expert, who works closely with the fishermen community, said the traditional fishermen have tabulated that a few types of fishes such as Chennavara (Red mullets), Numb fish and Torpedo Ray found in the rocky reefs of the coastal regions of the district have completely disappeared. Kumar says, “I recently documented 32 traditional fishing reefs on the south Thiruvananthapuram coast from the shipping channel and entrance of the proposed Vizhinjam port. These are under threat. I noticed that the sessile corals which provide a habitat for the fishes are getting bleached and degraded, resulting in depletion of fishes.” A

Biju Kumar, head of Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, said, "The region had a good mussel bed before the dredging works began. However, after the dredging began, we noticed that most of it was covered by sand. If this continues, it will lead to the total destruction of the mussel habitat."

The fishermen also blame the port project for destroying the mussel habitat and their livelihood. Sam Kutty, a member of the Fish Workers Forum, Kovalam unit, says, "The marine biodiversity has been completely destroyed due to the Vizhinjam port dredging. The mussel habitat is destroyed and due to less mussel catch, the mussel collectors are forced to take up other jobs to survive. If dredging continues, the sea ecosystem will be completely destroyed in a few years." The dark side of development Kumar Sahayaraju, a marine biologist involved in documentation of the reefs, says many rocky reefs such have already been destroyed due to dredging and more than 147 species including mussels and corals have been lost.

Kerala: Consistent floods, damaged homes force people to leave Kuttanad

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/consistent-floods-damaged-homes-force-people-leave-kerala-s-kuttanad-152898

"Their eyes look bleak, their faces strained. Their houses – built on either side of the deep, broad backwaters – are dilapidated, thanks to the constant floods and heavy rains. For the people of the 13 villages that comprise Kuttanad, a delta region in Alappuzha district in central Kerala, life has not been the same since the devastating deluge in 2018. They have been forced to either flee – renting or buying a house in less flood-prone areas – or continue to live in Kuttanad, fearing a flood every time it rains. The wetland agriculture system in Kuttanad is the only one in the country that supports rice cultivation below sea level on land created by draining delta swamps in brackish waters. The complex system is divided into three areas: wetlands used for paddy activities and catching fish, garden lands used for coconut, tuber and food crops plantation, and water areas used for inland fishing and shells. The rice and fish cultivation provides livelihood to a majority of the people while tourism, using houseboats, has ensured a new form of livelihood in the past few decades.

It all began with the 2018 floods In Kuttanad, known as Kerala's rice bowl for its rampant paddy cultivation, flooding was a part of life. Residents lived with water all around them, for them proximity to water was a normal thing. Their houses faced the backwaters, they washed their clothes and bathed in the backwaters, and almost every house has a boat for commuting to other places. Even before 2018, when the state witnessed one of the biggest floods in a century, floods would occur every year during the monsoon month of June. The floods and waterlogging were part of the people's lives. In 2018 too, Kuttanad was affected by two floods – one in July and the general flood in August. In the July floods too, people in several villages were shifted to relief camps while some preferred to live on boats converted into temporary homes. This

year too, the state has been witnessing heavy rains intermittently caused by different cyclones.

However, the southwest monsoon, which usually starts in June, was mild this year. There were heavy rains even in May, which is usually summer. “My eight-year-old younger son is worried about the rains now. He is scared of the rains, winds, flooding, because he saw how our house got damaged in the rains in May. We quickly shifted out of there,” says Jyothi, who now lives in Kuttamangalam village in Kainakary panchayat. She used to live in her ancestral house with her husband and two children for years. The family would temporarily move to a rented house whenever they were hit by floods. But this time, they left never to go back because their home was totally destroyed in the May rains. Jyothi’s family, like scores of other people, is waiting for the compensation announced by the government to shift to a safer locality. In August 2018, the government had declared that Rs 4 lakh each will be provided to families who lost 70% to 100% of their house and Rs 10 lakh each to families who lost both their house and land.

“My sisters live in Edathua, I’m planning to move there. It’s tough for me to leave the land where I was born and where I lived all these years. This is the place where my parents were cremated. But now our land has become unliveable,” Jyothi tells TNM, breaking down. Vinod, a former ward member of the Kainakary panchayat and part of a group named Kuttanad Vikasana Samithi (Kuttanad Development Council), elaborates, “Floods have always been a part of our lives. But it was only after it affected Alappuzha in 2018, surpassing all the 13 panchayats of Kuttanad, that the outside world began giving more attention to the floods.” While people like Jyothi are waiting for the government compensation, those who moved into rented houses elsewhere find it hard to survive as they have to commute to Kuttanad for their livelihood. People who were forced to leave Kuttanad Asokan, a hairstylist, lost his house in the 2020 floods. While the floods in 2018 and 2019 impacted most parts of the state, in 2020 the floods hit some parts. In August 2020, Asokan moved to a rented house in Nethaji Nagar in Alappuzha, 7 km from Kuttanad, but commutes daily to Kuttanad for work. It’s the only place where people know him and give him work.

He walks to find work – like his father and grandfather did. “Post-2018, I couldn’t sleep on rainy days. I’d sit guard checking if the water level rose to more than normal while my wife and 7-year-old grandson (who lives with us) slept. It was on such a night that the water level increased suddenly and my wife and I fled, carrying our grandson. All those years we managed to live there, but it isn’t possible anymore,” Asokan recollects. “We couldn’t take anything when we fled, we were just keen to save our lives. It was the house (in Kainakary) where I was born and where I lived. But now there’s no place to go back, because to get the government compensation we have to give on record that we abandoned the house. Also, there’s not even a stone left from my house, it was totally destroyed. We never thought one day we’d be forced to leave our home,” he says. Asokan and his family stayed at a neighbour’s place for a few days

before shifting to the rented house.

No government compensation yet However, the government has not yet paid the promised compensation. Like Asokan, Shiji Mon too had to leave his home in Kainakary and now lives in a rented house in Muhamma. “It has been a year since we lost our house in the floods, but we haven’t received the compensation from the government,” he says. Shiji bought land with borrowed money, hoping to repay it when the government gives the compensation. “When we ask about the compensation, the collectorate and village officials say they don’t have any information. Now that I have borrowed money to buy the land, it has put me in more trouble,” he says. Shiji used to work on tourist boats. But since the boats are not functioning due to the pandemic, he has been forced to do other jobs. “For that, I have to stay in Kuttanad looking for some random jobs. It’s not possible to commute every day from Muhamma as there are not many boat services (government-run boat services that connect different places in Kuttanad),” he tells TNM.

The residents had staged a protest in June for the speedy disposal of the compensation amount. It was only eight years since Unnikrishnan, who used to work as a postman, renovated his house and added more rooms. But the house was partially damaged in the August 2020 flood while a grocery shop he built adjacent to it was totally damaged. “The house was damaged after the bund collapsed. The agriculture officer, village officer and tehsildar visited the place and offered Rs four lakh as compensation. But nothing has been given so far,” he says. He is entitled to Rs 4 lakh as his house was partially damaged. Speaking to TNM, Kuttanad Tehsildar Vijayasenan says, “It’s for those whose houses had washed off in the flood that the government declared Rs 10 lakh compensation – Rs 6 lakh for buying land and Rs 4 lakh for building a house.” He adds that compensation has been given to those who lost houses in 2018 and 2019. But the 2020 compensation has not been dispersed yet.

People who leave Kuttanad temporarily Since the 2018 deluge, scores of people temporarily move out of Kuttanad from June to August. “We stay in rented houses for a few months and then go back home. Each time we have to find a house for rent,” says Lekha, who lives in Kainakary with her husband Shabu. They plan to build a house on higher ground. “We have agricultural land in Kuttanad… yes, we’re upset that we have to leave our native village. Since 2018 we’ve been anticipating a flood every year, the land in Kuttanad is sinking,” Shabu says. Once employed in Saudi Arabia, he now works as a manager in a furniture showroom. People stuck in Kuttanad However, there are many who can’t afford to build a new house outside Kuttanad and so are left with no other option but to continue living there. “We make a living by farming and leasing out land. We stay with relatives during the floods every year, but this time we decided to manage here itself because of the COVID-19 situation. We don’t have any savings and so we’re not able to move to higher ground (by buying land or house),” says Kanakamma, a native of Pulinkunnu panchayat. Kanakamma’s family would place sand-filled

sacks on the edge of the lake so that water wouldn't enter the house.

She has two daughters, both of whom are married. "But they don't even visit us often for fear of floods. My elder daughter, who has three kids, has moved (from Kuttanad) to a rented house on higher land even though she can't afford the rent. My son's wife also doesn't live here as she is scared for her children. We don't have a road, if we need to rush with our kids to higher ground the only option is by boat. The government has promised us a road and we're willing to give our land to construct the road. We want to come out of this situation somehow," Kanakamma says. The rains have impacted the residents' livelihoods too. Last year, they didn't earn anything from paddy farming due to the bund collapse. But those who had leased land needed to pay landowners. People like Kanakamma are not eligible for the government compensation as their houses were not fully destroyed in the floods. Those who have stayed back have made modifications inside their houses so that they won't be forced to leave if there is a sudden gush of water. "The land is sinking and each time a boat passes by the ripples causes water to enter the compound. Our suffering can't be expressed in words…

The toilet would soon become unusable once the water enters the house, then the rooms would get flooded, making it impossible to cook or change clothes. We manage by placing things above the ground on bricks," Vasumathi, another native of Pulinkunnu says. Inside her house we could see home appliances and even the bed is placed on bricks. She goes to stay with her parents or her daughter when the flooding becomes intense. Kuttanad residents live on land and houses inherited from their ancestors over generations. Now, no one wants to buy their property because of the floods, hence selling and moving out has become impossible. "We tried to sell a couple of times but the price we were offered was too low. We won't be able to buy land in any other place with the sale amount," says Vasumathi. Another Kainakary resident Viswanathan says, "I have two acres of coconut farm. I don't mind selling it for a throwaway price, but even then there are no buyers. The land is blessed with natural beauty, but for the past few years life here has become miserable mainly because of the continuous floods. They occur not once but twice or thrice a year. If it rains anywhere nearby, Kuttanad would be flooded." He blames the authorities for not implementing the Kuttanad package – envisaged by renowned agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan – in its true spirit. The Rs 1,840 crore package was launched in 2010 to deal with flood threats. "What I believe is that there is no mass migration yet from Kuttanad.

The generation that now lives in Kuttanad consists of those who had migrated to the region in the 60s. They lived through all the complications in the region. This is the generation that moulded Kuttanad and hence for them leaving is an emotional subject. But their children, some who even migrated abroad for jobs, find the floods a problem and will never come live here," Deepak Dayanandan, an environmental activist, tells TNM. "Kuttanad is the only region where water flows from the lower to the upper area. The backwaters here are one of the deepest in

Asia. The areas that hold water are higher and have less depth and so cannot contain water, causing the water to stagnate in the bottom/lower level, resulting in flooding. Now we're eager to somehow leave the land, already so many have left. Life is like hell, we don't feel secure. We continue living here as we're helpless, my children have no plans to settle here," he adds. His house too gets damaged in every flood, he would repair it only for it to be ruined in the next flood. Radhakrishnan, another native of Pulinkunnu, faces the same predicament. "Our house got damaged in the 2018 floods. Every time it rains, it's nerve-wracking. We keep our clothes and essential things packed so that we can leave immediately if a flood occurs, which we fear will happen in August or September.

We too want to move out, but leaving our place of birth is heartbreaking. Also, if we move to higher ground localities, life would be more expensive. The authorities need to chalk out a comprehensive plan to address our issues," he says. Some residents, however, have found a way out by building houses on large pillars, with the inhabitants occupying the first floor. But again, not everyone can afford the expensive construction. "The Rs 4 lakh compensation offered by the government is sufficient to construct only the pillars, we'll have to raise the rest of the amount," Unnikrishnan says. Vinod says that only if the authorities wake up and act can Kuttanad and its residents be saved. "It will take at least 10 years to envisage a plan to address the issues of the region. If that's not done, Kuttanad will vanish… that's our fear," he says. Telhsildar Vijayasenan who himself is a native of Pulinkunnu said that he is aware that a lot of people are leaving Kuttanad as the land has been sinking after the 2018 floods. "There should be a scientific study on this. I feel the land I was born and lived is not the same.

The change after 2018 was sudden, not a gradual one. The number of people leaving Kuttanad can be assessed from the decline in the numbers attending prayers at places of worship… it has become half of what it used to be," he says. "Kuttanad was a land of beauty, a land that used to give livelihood to people. But the situation is sad now. It's high time to save Kuttanad," he adds. According to Deepak Dayanandan, most people who migrated are from places like Kavalam, Edutha and Pulinkunnu, and were able to afford it.

"Even in this case, the older generation who do farming and similar livelihoods will try to continue in Kuttanad. But it is doubtful if anyone from later generations will settle here as there is no scope for urbanisation, to build multi-storeyed buildings," he adds. Post 2018, he says, some people raised their land so it wouldn't get inundated and cause flooding in nearby regions. "Flooding will keep occurring, but its duration can be reduced with a proper drainage system. In many streams, there are water supply pipelines that have made the drainage system defunct. The government can first correct the drainage system, next they can build secondary canals. This will all take time and prove to be a herculean task for Lower Kuttanad, which is the region that gets flooded not Upper Kuttanad. Any plans to reduce the impact of the floods should consider the region's ecosystems too," he says. "A major government intervention is

needed, not on a small scale, it's a long process. We may need to go back to the concept of development at a panchayat level," he adds.

Kerala: Yellow warning issued in six districts

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/yellow-warning-issued-six-kerala-districts-152918

"Heavy rains are expected in Kerala on Monday, July 26. A yellow warning urging authorities to be aware or updated has been issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Alappuzha, Idukki, Kottayam, Kannur, Kasaragod and Ernakulam. According to the Kerala Disaster Management Authority all districts will receive rains. IMD has warned fishermen from Kerala and Lakshadweep coast not to venture into the sea from July 26 to July 29. Wind speeds may touch 40 kmph off the coasts of Kerala, Karnataka and Lakshadweep, stated IMD. Meanwhile the Idukki district disaster management authority (DDMA) has said that the water level at Mullaperiyar dam has risen up to 135.4 feet. The DDMA stated that if the water level further rises to 142 feet, the spillway shutters of the dam will be opened after necessary notifications and warnings. The DDMA also directed the concerned authorities to inform residents if the shutters are opened and to relocate those living near the dam if the shutters are opened. DDMA also ordered district officials to open relief camps. Control rooms will be opened in Idukki district if the water level in Mullaperiyar reaches 136 feet.

On Sunday, July 25, several parts of Kerala witnessed heavy rainfall. Moderate to heavy rainfall occurred in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Kottayam, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod districts. A yellow warning had been issued for all these districts for Sunday. The Met Department has also predicted strong winds in the Gulf of Mannar region, Bay of Bengal, South Andaman Sea and parts of the Arabian Sea until July 29.

Kerala: KSSP concerned over appointment of members of panel looking into fishers' issues

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kssp-concerned-over-appointment-of-members-of-panel-looking-into-fishers-issues/article35525944.ece

"The Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) has welcomed the State government's move to appoint a three-member committee to look into issues that may crop up on account of the draft Coastal Zone Management Plan under the Coastal Regulation Zone notification of 2019. The Parishad, however, expressed concern over the members of the committee that had been constituted, among others, to look into livelihood and safety issues of fishers, said a press release here. It said that the government had appointed the committee through an order dated July 1 to study the draft prepared by the National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS).

The Parishad's reservation is that one of the members of the committee is a Delhi-based consultant on environmental impact of various projects. The member is also a consultant to real estate developers, builders of resorts, and quarry owners. It is not appropriate to make such a person a member of the committee, the release said. Another member is a legal advocate of violators of coastal zone regulations, the Parishad alleged. The release claimed that the two would not be able to represent the views and interests of the fishing community, as they were in no way related to the sector. A democratic government should ensure that the interests of the fishing community, now reeling under climate change and other adverse conditions, are protected, said O.M. Shankaran, president, and P. Gopakumar, general secretary of the Parishad, in a statement on Sunday.

Kerala: Future uncertain for trawler boat operators

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/future-uncertain-for-trawler-boat-operators/article35531110.ece

"Trawler boat owners engaged in deep-sea fishing are staring at a bleak future with the price of diesel going up relentlessly and loss of significant number of fishing days owing to COVID-19 restrictions. V.T. Gireesh, a trawler boat owner from Munambam, said around 800 boats operated out of Vypeen, Kochi and Munambam harbours, employing 10 persons each on an average, while thousands were engaged in fish sale. According to him, the loss of fishing days has resulted in serious crisis, and most boat owners do not have the wherewithal to even repair boats and fishing gear even as the annual 52-day trawling ban is set to end on the midnight of July 31. In a recent memorandum to the State government, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association had said that the annual ban on trawling left the fishing community in dire straits even as it came close on the heels of the lockdown and consequent loss of fishing days owing to closure of harbours. The association said with over 3.5 lakh people depending on the fishing sector for livelihood, long-term restrictions would exacerbate their crisis. Meanwhile, Mr. Gireesh called upon the government to take a sympathetic view of fishers' concern and not to insist on heavy licence fees. While other States do not impose heavy fees, boat owners from Kerala are forced to pay huge registration fees. Moreover, the Fisheries Department has instructed boat owners to renew their licences by July 31. The steep rise in the price of diesel too has been a big drag on fishing operations. The cost of each fishing expedition has gone up by around 30%, and poor landings have added to boat owners' woes.

Kerala: Harbour dept to initiate study on shore protection

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/harbour-dept-to-initiate-study-on-shore-protection/articleshow/84595231.cms

"With the massive sea erosion irrespective of weather patterns eating up chunks of beach

at Kovalam, Harbour engineering department is set to undertake a detailed study on shore protection works at Hawa beach in Kovalam. The department has invited tenders for data collection and investigation, which is crucial to identify the exact strategy for shore protection at Kovalam. The investigation work will be carried out at Rs 14.68 lakh. “The investigation will focus on factors which have led to erosion at Kovalam. We also need to do a comparative analysis of pattern of erosion over the years,” said an official with the Harbour engineering department. As per the annual report on shoreline change of Vizhinjam coast between 2018 and 2019 submitted to Kerala coastal zone management authority (KCZMA), the beach on the northern part of the port between Kovalam-Panathura and Poonthura showed erosion trend for both post monsoon and fair weather periods. In the pre-monsoon period of 2019 (April to May), significant erosion was noticed at the northern side of the port, Valiyathura to Thumba. Kovalam, Panathura and Cheriyathura showed accretion.

The beach volume changes for February 2015 and February 2019 showed accretion at Valliyaveli to Vettucaud, Mullur to Adimalathura and Poovar and erosion at Shangumugham to Beemapally, Punthura, Pannathura, Kovalam, Poovar to Edapadu beach, as per the report. The shoreline change reported for 2019-20, however, showed Kovalam was one of the areas where accretion was reported. Recently, owing to recurring instances of sea erosion, beach nourishment technique was proposed by transport minister Antony Raju. Raju has demanded that the sand being mined as part of the construction of Vizhinjam harbour shall be deposited on the coast from Poonthura to Veli. The minister gave a letter to fisheries minister Saji Cherian citing the need for preparing a project report. According to experts, natural and manmade factors have contributed equally to depletion of sediment deposit on the beaches along the district coast. Cumulative erosion has been detrimental to the beaches. Earlier, the district used to have a regular weather pattern like monsoon from June to September and then there would be a fair patch which will begin from October till April. This period used to witness a natural beach building process. Even if beaches got washed away during rain, part of it or even more would come back in the following months. Periodic cyclonic activity, storm conditions, extreme rainfall situations and some manmade reasons may have resulted in this, the officials said.

Kerala: Fisherfolk are still at sea over their livelihoods

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/fisherfolk-in-kerala-are-still-at-sea-over-their-livelihoods/article35419540.ece

"Mumbai, July 20 James Kalathil*, a fisherman from Thuravoor, has pondered over leaving this profession many a time in the past few months. During the last lockdown, he was compelled to go to work by taking a secretive route to avoid the police checkpoints, which

helped to bring in some money during an otherwise dry period. He managed to go for 'neetu pani' - individuals or groups of two or three people venture into the sea on a 'ponthu' - amid the lockdown. Few others were not so 'fortunate' enough to go for such clandestine work, like Sebastian Maliekal, who has remained at home for the past one and a half months with no means to earn an income. The fisher communities of Chellanam and Thuravoor gram panchayats of Ernakulam and Alappuzha districts, respectively, are an aggrieved lot. With just over 40 working days in the past year, compared to 200 days of work in a normal year, the fisheries sector is staring at an estimated loss of Rs.1,371 crore, as per an assessment by the Kerala State Planning Board. The sector was plagued by multiple problems like cyclones and floods, which significantly brought down the number of days of work, even before the onset of the pandemic.

While the fisher families were slowly limping back to make both ends meet, the second wave of Covid-19 struck. It has been almost 25 years since Maliekal began his fishing work. He rues not having learnt any other skill, because of which he is still anchored to this field. "Free ration kits worth Rs.300- Rs.500 does not change the desperate circumstances of our lives. We are forced to borrow money or pawn valuables in order to survive each day." According to the Department of Fisheries website, under the Saving-Cum-Relief scheme (SRS), Rs.600 is collected from fishermen and an amount of Rs.1,800 is released to them during lean season every year, which is April to June in the marine sector and June to August in inland sector. But, as per latest update, fishermen now have to pay Rs.1,500 in order to receive Rs.4,500 in return, under SRS. According to information received from the Chief Minister's office in September 2020, as a response to the petition filed by former Union Minister K V Thomas, an amount of Rs.31.16 crore was sanctioned from the State Disaster Relief Fund and Rs.5 crore from the Chief Minister's Disaster Relief Fund to support fishermen who lost their jobs during the Covid-19 lockdown. The families of fishermen engaged in fishing activities were to be given an amount of Rs.2,000, while registered fishermen Rs.1,000, in addition to SRS.

According to a report by The New Indian Express, as many as 1,78,365 fishermen, included under the SRS, were sanctioned an amount of Rs.3,000 amid the shutdown. Kalathil, a member of Matsya Thozhilali Kshemanidhi Board or Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board (KFWFB), which provides for the constitution of welfare of fishermen in the State, said although he had heard of these aids, he has not received either of the sanctioned amounts nor does he want to run behind it. Complaints to the fisheries office and collectorate have fallen on deaf ears. The traditional fishers who mainly depend on the trawling period (June 9 to July 31 this year), to earn some big bucks, (people earn from 50k to Rs.1 lakh or more over the 2 months. In comparison, Kalathil has got Rs.5,000 since last week. By this time, he should have earned around 40k normally. The fishing boats, which usually take around 20 fishermen, are carrying larger groups of 35 people or more now .Such large numbers are gathering this year because people from other professions like carpenters, daily labourers, etc who were also

rendered jobless due to covid and lockdown, are taking up fishing to make ends meet. This, in turn, reduces the individual profit share from about Rs.3,000 to Rs.1,000.

“We can't no to these people because we understand the struggle to somehow make ends meet,” says Kalathil. Xavier Sajeev has taken up jobs as a painter and a fisherman. But his income has reduced by at least 50 per cent in comparison to previous years. “I got Rs.2,000 and Rs.1,000 as separate deposits from the government as financial aid amid the lockdown last year, but not this year. Rs.200 each for 6 days of work lost due to Tauktae cyclone was also credited. But, there are many discrepancies in the distribution of these amounts to people,” he says. On top of these Covid induced difficulties, the destructive trail left by cyclone Ockhi in November 2017 has aggravated the problems. “Any hint of a low pressure area developing is a reason for the government to stop us from going into the sea. It almost seems like we are bearing the brunt for the State’s mistake of dismissing the warnings issued prior to Ockhi,” said Sajeev. Traditional fishers feel that they can easily reach back to safety by gauging the wind and waves, since they don’t go as far as trawlers. Dr. Saly N Thomas, Principal Scientist at Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), said the government’s warnings cannot be completely ruled out as of late, the western coast is becoming vulnerable to inclement weather conditions due to climate changes.

According to Dr. M. V. Baiju, senior scientist at CIFT, the small fishing boats with a speed of 10 km/h - 15 km/h cannot match the strong winds which blow at 40 km/h - 55 km/h. Most of the vessels here are not scientifically designed adhering to the specifications for stability. “The mandatory life saving equipment and communication systems are also rarely followed by the fisherfolk,” he added. Sajeev, a fisherman at Chellanam harbour, feels that Rs.200, under the financial assistance announced by the fisheries department for Tauktae cyclone affected fishermen, is an unfair compensation for a day’s loss of work, but it is better than nothing. On the other hand, Maliekal who works at the Kochi harbour, is unaware of the ?200 compensation and did not know anyone who received it. “Do you think Rs.1,000 is enough for a family of four to survive for a month? The government should make provision to provide at least Rs.3,000,” said Maliekal. Emails to the Chief Minister’s officer and fisheries department elicited no response.

Kerala: How Covid impacted the fisherfolk?

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/features/specials/how-covid-impacted-the-fisherfolk-of-kerala--1.5833797

"The coastline of Kerala is currently undergoing a colossal face//lift. Hopefully, this renovation will beckon more tourists and visitors. The recent revitalization of beaches includes greener pastures, coastal highway, tiled walkways, and the walls of the beach beautified by breath-taking paintings that tell the tales of the city. While plans to enhance the potential for

coastline tourism proceed apace on one side, the other side shows the stark reality of the livelihood of the fishermen on a standstill. The pandemic exacerbated the already pathetic condition of the marginalised communities. The people engaged in fishing are mostly from the Dheevara, Muslim, and Latin Catholic communities, who are grouped under Other Backward Communities (OBCs), which account for around 10.44 lakh population of Kerala. The onset of Covid-19 and the sharp decline in marine fish production (4.75 lakh tonnes) since 2019 has had an extremely emasculating effect on them. The people who were formerly praised as “superheroes"" during the floods swiftly ended up being scorned as the ""super spreaders"" of Covid-19. It must be remembered that social distancing, sanitizers, and other means of personal protection are a luxury for these backward communities.

Pandemic And Its Cultural Impact Apart from the socio-economic distress, the pandemic has had a significant impact on the cultural life of these communities. These people share a special relationship with the sea and its environment which they consider to be sacred (Their habit of referring to the 'sea' as ""Kadalamma"", which means ""Mother Sea"", shows the maternal attachment of the people with the sea). The lives of people of the Dheevara community are generally enwrapped by the clouds of superstition and religious dogma. They usually worship ""Bhagavati"" or ""Kali"" and attribute bad lucks in their occupation as punishment from the Goddess. Also they perform various rituals to please the Goddess to protect them during their sea sails and to help them when the fish population is on the decline. But under the present circumstances, their rites and rituals remain restrained within the four corners of their homes. Pandemic-related occupational insecurity have forced the youth to seek employment in other sectors. The Scars of Socio-Economic Crisis Although Kerala has high socio-economic indicators, the growth of living standards and access to basic amenities of the fishermen is still very slow.

The quantity and quality of ichthyological wealth is a crucial determining factor of the income of the marine folks. As the income from the sources is seasonal, the scope of savings for any precautionary motive is virtually nil. Further, the disruptive effects of Covid-19 have had very harmful effects upon the fisheries and aquaculture industry. It affected both supply and demand chains in the fisheries sector. Every link of the supply chain — fishing, input, processing, transportation, circulation, wholesale, and retail is vulnerable to COVID-19 related restrictions. In this chain connecting buyers and sellers, even the disruption of one link will send a series of chain reactions which will emasculate the entire system. The rise in diesel hike increased the operational cost and further slowdown the supply of inputs like ice, fishing gear, and other equipment. Thus pandemic-related uncertainties may pressure people to slow down spending which will result in the reduction of demand, the decline of price, and the dwindling of the amount of investment available for future production.

The Covid crisis has also affected the personal health and safety of fishermen. As they live in

congested and densely populated areas, the health risk and lack of proper drinking water for these individuals are also major concerns. For the primary healthcare facilities, there are only 39 dispensaries across the state. Also, the isolation increased stress and social pressure have further aggravated them. The recent trawling and social distancing measures have also contributed to worsening the condition of fishermen — specifically small-scale fishermen due to their limited participation in the decision-making processes because of their limited organizational capacity. In the wake of Cyclone Tauktae, there were 6 days strict ban on all occupations related to the sea, and the government provided them with social security worth Rs 1200 as compensation. Natural calamities like this are just the extension of hazards that was already happening in the coastal region for a long time. Nutrition and calorie deficits in households of fisherfolks intensified due to the food risk which ends them up completely hanging on rationing and the special food kits of the government.

The brunt of economic fallout disproportionally affects women, 80% of allied workers in fisheries are women in Kerala. They often do not have the same access as men to education, finance, technology, etc... which severely limits their influence on decision-making on matters that have a crucial impact on their lives. Also, the number of women in for the pension for the "wife of deceased fisherfolk" is increasing. The bleak reality of their children's lives stands in sharp contrast with the buoyantly bedecked walls of the beach. Meanwhile, the laxity of the union government towards this marginalised community is reflected in the union budget. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sambada Yojana (PMMSY) scheme which aims to encourage business investments in the fishing sector doesn't directly address the needs of the current situation. Possible Countermeasures Active efforts at all levels to minimize the impact of Covid -19 on the fisherman communities should be immediately taken. Lack of demand among fisherfolks can only be compensated through social security schemes.

Strengthening women empowerment initiatives like Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) should be promoted to suit the needs of women and should be implemented in ways that would make women more financially independent. As the 13th five-year plan and the United Nations' sustainable development goals lay special emphasis on boosting the ‘’blue economy", the socio-economic well-being of the fisherfolk community is the primary area of concern to which we should focus our attention. Investment in the ""blue recovery"" plans to promote growth and resilience among the fishermen community and to attain ""blue sustainability"" should be given paramount importance. The distribution of special concessions, allowances, and nutritional security will result in productive labour. Therefore, any sort of developmentary vision towards coastline tourism should go hand in hand with addressing the problems and concerns of the indigenous communities who constitute an indispensable part of it.

Kerala: Restore beaches, create bio-shields to check Chellanam's coastal erosion: KUFOS

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/restore-beaches-create-bio-shields-check-chellanam-s-coastal-erosion-kufos-152423

"Over a month after the Kerala government announced that the coastal village of Chellanam in Ernakulam district would be turned into a model fishing village, the Kerala University of Fisheries and Oceanographic Studies (KUFOS) has submitted its recommendations for the project. The interim report prepared by KUFOS was handed over to Minister of Fisheries Saji Cherian by KUFOS Chairman Riji John on Thursday, July 15. From restoring beaches to providing coastal protection by creating bio-shields with mangroves, KUFOS has made numerous recommendations to the government, including focusing on the agricultural and fisheries sector in the region. Chellanam is one of the coastal villages in Kerala that has witnessed severe coastal erosion. This has resulted in acute floods and the destruction of property since 2017. In May 2021, even amid the raging COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of families in the panchayat bore the brunt of the floods. For many years now, the residents in the region have been demanding that a sea wall be constructed to prevent coastal erosion. Though a project to construct a geo tube seawall was commenced in 2019 by the state government, it is yet to be completed.

One of the prime recommendations given by KUFOS is to take measures for beach nourishment and "heaping of sand in the nearshore waters, like Holland model, for coastal protection". The sand from dredging conducted by the Cochin Port Trust is proposed to be used for this purpose. Creating bio-shields with mangroves is the other key recommendation by the KUFOS team to address the issue of coastal erosion. The team also noted that restoring the canal and drainage system of Chellanam and its surrounding regions is of key importance. Unauthorised constructions and invasions should be evacuated, it said. A special officer with statutory powers should be appointed for this. KUFOS has recommended a multi-purpose rehabilitation centre to be constructed with a minimum total area of 9,000 square metre to rehabilitate people on 'turbulent days'. The facility can be used for purposes related to tourism during other times. The plan also focuses on the health care facilities in the village. "A full-fledged government hospital and recreation centre should also be formed," it said.

"People of Chellanam had been recognised as very good in farming and fishing in the past but unfortunately they lost the glory in recent times which needs to be revamped to protect the livelihood of thousands of families. Since socio-economics is an integral part of the development index, a comprehensive socio-economic study has been proposed by the KUFOS team," it added. The KUFOS team has also stressed the need to enhance the fisheries sector, by "improving the cold chains for attaining better price levels, value addition of fishery products and utilisation of waste materials".

Kerala: Vannamei farming in Biofloc culture: Malappuram farmer rears 4000 shrimps in

12000-litre tank

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/agriculture/animal-husbandry/vannamei-farming-in-biofloc-culture-malappuram-farmer-rears-4000-shrimps-in-12000-litre-tank-1.5829133

"Vannamei shrimp is one of the most sought after variety but is very rare in Kerala. They are usually cultivated in coastal fields as it needs saline water to breed. But Malappuram Purathur native Subrahmanian, 64, cultivates Vannamei at home in a biofloc style that is suitable for those who have limited access to land and water. Biofloc farming is less expensive in terms of feed as the waste formed in the biofloc tank is eaten by the bacteria in it and the fish consume these bacteria. Subrahmanian reared 4,000 Vannamei prawns in a 12,000-litre tank in this season. When it was harvested after 120 days, he earned Rs 400 per kilogram. He has now started to rear 1500 murrells (Varaal in Malayalam) in a 20,000-litre tank. There are also Genetically Improved Farmed Tilapia (GIFT) and other varieties. These shrimps are brought from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. He is also a master in recirculatory aquaculture, a less water needed farming method, and aquaponics, which uses fish waste instead of soil and fertilizers. Subrahmanian has been in Abu Dhabi for 33 years. After he returned, he started to cultivate cucumbers. In 2017, he started fish farming. Later, he carried out farming in subsidy under the Central Government's Blue Revolution, Fisheries' Popular fish farming schemes and Subhiksha Kerala project. He also produces saplings for Krishi Bhavan in Tirur block.

Kerala: Demand for review of deep sea fishing rules

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/demand-for-review-of-deep-sea-fishing-rules/article35332975.ece

"Deep sea fishers represented by the Kerala State Fishing Boat Operators' Association have said that the rules in the State governing deep sea fishing should be re-examined in the light of marine resources being exploited by fishers from other States and other countries even during the monsoon ban on trawling operations off the coast of Kerala. In a submission to the Kerala government, the boat operators said mechanised boats in the country were licensed to go across the waters and fish in the country's exclusive economic zone. But while fishing boats and operators from other maritime States operated freely, the boats from Kerala were subjected to significant controls. The controls come in the form of fines and other restrictions for violation of the State rules including the ban on juvenile fishing while operators from others States were not subjected to such restrictions. The boat operators also alleged that the annual monsoon ban on trawling had not resulted in any significant increase in fish stocks and that studies had revealed that the breeding season of fish was after the monsoon between October

and November. The monsoon ban is imposed in the State between the middle of June and July. The boat operators said that India's oceanic squids, amounting to 25 lakh tonnes, was not being exploited by the country's fishers while Chinese boats were netting the resource and selling it in the international market.

Kerala: Trawlers want government aid to tide over fuel price hike

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/kerala-trawlers-want-government-aid-to-tide-over-fuel-price-hike/article35295208.ece

"Hit hard by the fuel price hike, fishing boat operators are asking the State government to support them by earmarking a small fund from its increased revenue from petroleum products. Boat operators pointed out that the day-to-day rise in fuel cost forced them to forego at least Rs.1 lakh towards each sea venture. At the same time, the dwindling catch did not compensate for the fuel costs. They said a trawling boat spends around Rs.5 lakh for a five-day venture into the seas and it is difficult to get enough returns after spending a huge amount on fuel. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of the All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, told BusinessLine that the fuel price hike, coupled with the impact of Covid, has affected the livelihood of more than three lakh people dependent on the fishery sector directly or indirectly. Allow Kerala fishing boats to venture into deep sea, plead operators Besides mechanised boat owners, traditional fishermen are also adversely affected, especially since fishes on the Kerala coast are reportedly migrating to neighbouring states.

This has forced fishermen to venture deeper into the sea, but the fuel price hike is a major deterrent. Permit fee hike The association also alerted Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan that the hike in permit fee — between Rs.4,500 and Rs.52,000, depending on the boat length — has badly affected the sector. It pointed out that other maritime states levied Rs.500-3,000 per year. Though the Kerala government reduced the upper limit to Rs.26,500 after repeated representations, there has been no order to this effect so far. A majority of the boat owners have incurred debt after Covid affected their income. Moreover, the Fisheries Department imposes nearly Rs.2.5 lakh fine even for simple violations, Kalapurackal said. Fishing boat operators want trawling ban on west coast cut to 30 days As the fishery sector gears up for a new season after the 52-day monsoon trawling ban, which ends on July 31, the association has requested the Chief Minister to intervene for the sustainable development of the sector.

Kerala: Expert panels scrutinising draft Coastal Zone Management Plan

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/expert-panels-scrutinising-draft-coastal-zone-management-plan/article35288246.ece

"As the Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) for Kerala, which will define development activities along the coastal belt, is being finalised, various stakeholder agencies

are assessing the impact of the draft plan. While the Fisheries Department has constituted an expert committee to assess the impact of the proposal on the sector, the Tourism Department has engaged a consultant to list its concerns. The draft CZMP, which covers nine coastal districts and Kottayam, is being circulated to elicit views from stakeholder agencies. The Fisheries Department too has constituted an expert committee by including 10 members. The department, while noting that fisherfolk and fish farmers are the major stakeholders in the coastal regulation zone area, feels that inputs for housing and development activities for the sustainable development of coastal areas need to be incorporated in the CZMP. It also plans to come out with an Integrated Fisheries Development Plan, which can be incorporated into the CZMP. The 10-member committee is headed by K.V. Thomas, former head of the Coastal Processes Division of the National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS).

The Environment Department, on its part, has constituted a three-member committee consisting of the Additional Chief Secretary, environmental consultant P.Z. Thomas, and lawyer P. B. Sahasranamam to study the draft plan. Meanwhile, a section of fishermen has opposed the nomination of members to the committee. Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (TUCI) State secretary Charles George complained that the committee had been constituted to sabotage the implementation of the CZMP. The organisation demanded that the committee be scrapped. The suggestions put forward by various agencies will be discussed at the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority meeting and forwarded to the NCESS for its consideration. The public will get an opportunity to comment on the draft proposal and suggest modifications during public hearings. The State will be able to avail the benefits of the 2019 CRZ notification only if the CZMP is approved and notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Kerala: 3,000 houses built under Punargeham project

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/3000-houses-built-under-punargeham-project/article35293185.ece

"The second Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has initiated a slew of measures to find solutions to problems faced by the fisher community in the State in five years, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. Mr. Cherian was distributing Mikavu-2020 awards, instituted by the Matsyafed, to students of the fisher community who scored high marks in the last year's SSLC and Plus Two examinations here on Monday. The Minister said the government was constructing 20,000 houses under the Punargeham project to rehabilitate fisher families living within 50 metres of the coastline in the State. "The construction of 3,000 houses under the project has been completed. The government is committed to providing housing to all fisher families," he said. The previous LDF government launched the Punargeham project to provide housing for all fisher families residing in areas vulnerable to sea

erosion and tidal wave attack in nine coastal districts of the State. Mr. Cherian said the government was implementing projects worth Rs.12,500 crore for coastal protection.

"The completion of the coastal highway project will bring a new wave of development to the coastal areas. Hatcheries will be started in different parts of the State for production of 12 crore fish seeds in three years," he said. On improving basic infrastructure facilities in schools in coastal areas, he said the construction of buildings for 36 schools was progressing. The Chethi Fishing Harbour in Alappuzha would be realised soon, the Minister said. A total of 318 SSLC students and 104 Plus Two students were given awards comprising a cash prize of Rs.5,000 and a plaque. P.P. Chitharanjan, MLA, presided. Alappuzha district panchayat president K.G. Rajeswari, Aryad block panchayat president K.D. Maheendran, Mararikulam south gramapanchayat president P.P. Sangeetha, Matsyafed managing director Lawrence Harold, and others spoke.

Kerala: Cut fishing hours as stock of 79 varieties overfished'

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/cut-fishing-hours-as-stock-of-79-varieties-overfished/articleshow/84328433.cms

"A biomass dynamics modelling study carried out on 223 fish stocks of 41 marine fishery resources of India under a multi-gear and multispecies fishery situation revealed that 79 fish stocks are overfished. The study published in the ICES Journal of Marine Science says that it is necessary to reduce the total annual fishing hours of nine different categories of fishing fleets harvesting marine fishery resources. The study aimed to derive an understanding for management requirements of 223 commercially-important fish stocks in different maritime states of India. Two decades (1997-2016) of fishery-related data on the harvest of resources by different types of fishing fleets were used and a gear-standardization parameter was used for the analysis. In this category of overfished and overfishing, the main marine species caught include Indian oil sardine, mackerel, anchovies black pomfret, catfishes, crabs, frigate and bullet tunas, penaeid prawns, threadfin breams, wolf herring, etc, which are common across all maritime states. "Such models are used worldwide to study sustainability and management. However, unlike elsewhere, in our water, we have a vast diversity in species as in the fishing gear used. A need for such a study arose after the huge fall in catch of Indian oil sardines.

Each maritime state had shown a drop in largely caught local species," said Sunil Mohamed, fisheries scientist and one of the authors of the study. The team of researchers from Central

Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) did the analysis using the time-series of landings of species, fishing gears and total landings. The results indicate that 34.1% of the assessed fish stocks in India are sustainable, 36.3% are overfished, 26.5% are recovering, and 3.1% are in the overfishing status. “One of the challenges was incorporating the multi-gear nature of fishing into the model. We solved it by introducing a gear standardization parameter,” said CMFRI ex-principal scientist Mohamed. The highest percentage of sustainable fish stocks were in Goa (63.6), West Bengal (52.6) and Kerala (52%), the highest percentage of overfished stocks were in Puducherry (71.4%), Gujarat and Daman Diu (65%) and Maharashtra (46.4%), and the highest percentage of recovering fish stocks were in Andhra Pradesh (50%), Odisha (40.7%) and Maharashtra (32.1%).

Kerala: Scientific, participatory approach to Vembanad Lake conservation sought

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/scientific-participatory-approach-to-vembanad-lake-conservation-sought/article35173863.ece

"As the State government plans to launch the multi-crore Vembanad Lake Conservation Project in the coming months, experts, environmentalists and stakeholders have called for a scientific and participatory approach to project planning and implementation. According to Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, who attended a couple of meetings in connection with the project in recent days, the first phase of the project will begin in January 2022. Mr. Cherian said Rs.100 crore was earmarked in the Budget for the first phase. Officials said the project was aimed at the eco-restoration of Vembanad Lake, a Ramasar site spanning several districts, through coordination of various government departments and people’s participation. Besides making the waterbody pollution-free, the project envisages the conservation of fisheries resources. “Biodiversity conservation should be at the forefront. Biological continuity of Vembanad Lake need to be established.

All physical changes being planned as part of the project should ultimately ensure the conservation of living organisms and be beneficial to the ecosystem people like fishermen, clam collectors and so on,” said K.G. Padmakumar, Director, International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea-level Farming, Thottapally. Against dredging Mr. Padmakumar warned that dredging in the name of de-siltation would have a detrimental effect on the entire lake ecosystem. “Unscientific implementation of the project will be the final straw. Dredging has destroyed the Kochi Kayal, while the same thing is happening at Thottappally. Vembanad Lake needs de-silting not dredging,” he said, adding that the government needed to make clarity on the entire project. Area reduction According to a study carried out by the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP) a few years ago, the water carrying capacity of the lake has diminished by 78%. The lake has shrunk from 36,000 ha to 12,500 ha owing to widespread reclamation and encroachments.

Today, it is one of the most-polluted waterbodies in the world. A report by the Kerala State Planning Board, 'A Special Package for Post-Flood Kuttanad,' notes that the "shrinkage of surface area and depth of Vembanad Lake is a major reason for the acuteness of Kuttanad floods." KSSP district secretary Jayan Champakulam has urged the government to form a committee by including representatives of local bodies, people's representatives, farmers, fishermen, and tourism and other stakeholders for the success of the project. "A detailed project report (DPR) should be prepared along with fixing priorities. The DPR should be subjected to public scrutiny. Apart from the joint committee, an expert committee should be constituted to provide necessary expert/scientific advice," Mr. Champakulam said. Water-carrying capacity He said the accumulated waste, including plastic, should be removed from the waterbody and its water-carrying capacity should be increased. "Implementation of an Agriculture calendar in Kuttanad, opening of the Thanneermukkom barrage continuously at least a year, and bringing some restrictions on houseboat operations should be considered as part of the project," Mr. Champakulam said.

Kerala: Project to expand fish farming soon: Minister

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/project-to-expand-fish-farming-soon-minister/article35182769.ece

"The State government will implement a project to expand fish farming, Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian has said. Possibilities of starting fish farming will be considered in all water bodies. He was speaking after visiting the fisheries hatchery at Neyyar Dam on Tuesday. Steps are being taken to increase the production of fishlings. The capacity of all the hatcheries in the State will be increased for this purpose. Ornamental fish cultivation will also be expanded, the Minister said. The Minister was accompanied by C.K.Hareendran, MLA, and officials from the Fisheries Department.

Kerala: Missing fishers found dead https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/missing-fishers-found-dead/article35160619.ece "Three fishermen, who went missing after their boat capsized in high waves, were found dead in Kasaragod on Monday. The bodies of Sandeep (32), Ratheesh (32), and Karthik (28) were found during a search by fishermen and the police. The fishing boat capsized in strong waves near the Kasaragod harbour around 6 a.m. on Saturday. While there were seven people in the boat, four of them were rescued by fishermen after they managed to hang on to the overturned boat.

Kerala: Boat capsizes, 3 fishermen missing

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kozhikode/kerala-boat-capsizes-3-fishermen-missing/articleshow/84131029.cms

"Three fishermen went missing after their fibre boat capsized off the Kasaragod coast at

Nellikkunnu early Sunday morning. The boat with seven fishermen had gone for fishing from the Nellikunnu beach on Sunday morning. It met with the accident after being hit by a huge wave when it was crossing the Nellikunnu estuary. The boat capsized and the three fishermen hailing from Kottikulam identified as Ratheesh, 32, Sandeep, 34, and Karthik, 28, went missing. The other four fishermen managed to swim to safety and were rescued by other fishing boats. They have been admitted to Kasaragod general hospital. A search has been launched for the missing people by Bekal coastal police, fisheries department and local fishermen. Coast guard units at Mangaluru and Beypore have also been alerted. Kasaragod MLA N A Nellikunnu, and officials of police, revenue and fisheries departments and officials and councillors of Kasaragod municipality reached the spot. The boat met with the accident after being hit by a huge wave when it was crossing the Nellikunnu estuary

Kerala: Has huge potential for aquaculture: Aquaconnect

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/kerala-has-huge-potential-for-aquaculture-aquaconnect/articleshow/83959838.cms

"According to fish and shrimp farming startup Aquaconnect, Kerala has a huge potential in aquaculture, which is untapped. India is the second-largest aquaculture economy but the adoption of technology is very limited. India is the second-largest aquaculture economy but the adoption of technology is very limited and this has resulted in lower productivity in farmers and wider diseases in aqua produce, top official of Aquaconnect said. “Kerala is filled with abundant brackish and freshwater resources, The estimated inland water area is 16,000 ha and brackish water is about 65,213 ha out of which 14,875 ha are only developed for aquaculture practices. About 2.22 lakh fisherfolk are dependent upon those water resources for their livelihood, out of which 90% are smallholding farmers. The rough calculation would be around 26000 farmers involved in this activity. The Kerala inland production is 2 lakh tonnes from available water bodies. Kerala has got potential to improve its share in the aqua-farming space and contribute to aquaculture exports from India,” said Rajamanohar Somasundaram, Founder and CEO, Aquaconnect. Aquaconnect has recently launched ‘Pond Diary’ a first of its kind feature to help farmers in maintaining a log of their farm activities.

The app uses artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) technologies to decode collective intelligence and issue a mass advisory to all farmers. A simple innovation coupled with a smart chatbot will enable 44,000 farmers to manage their farms better. Farmers traditionally keep the log of the activities manually in a notebook. Due to the absence of data capturing systems farmers suffer from poor maintenance of farm data to unavailability of farm credits & insurance. The ’Pond Dairy’ feature captures farmers' culture production data starting from seeds stocked, water quality reports, daily feed quantity, weekly growth, animal signs, expense bills, farm infrastructure details, license, govt records and more. It is the first step

towards capturing pond production data in a simple way and bringing precision in aqua farming with collective intelligence. It is an open-ended diary platform, wherein the farmers can write anything about their farm in any multimedia format. With their Machine Learning algorithm, Aquaconnect is able to decode the information given by farmers and provide advisory at a mass scale. The Pond Diary feature has WhatsApp like interface which is very user friendly and familiar with the farmers.

"Aqua Farmers are deprived of simple technology tools that can make a big impact on their productivity and efficiency. We are very confident about the launch of the new feature and it helps in solving the woes of the farmers which result in low productivity. We will encourage farmers to adopt the tool and educate them digitally. And we shall be having manual remote intervention in the form of an integrated chatbot," Somasundaram said. "Partial information we can get from the farmer but since it is all self-fed info, we also need automated validation. Our focus is to decode & understand what every farmer writes every day. That is when we are using ML to decode and provide input advisory based on what he has given us. So that is how we aim to provide advisory at a mass scale on our technology," he added.

The data-driven approach helps farmers to adopt sustainable farming practices in every culture operation and improves productivity & better disease management with higher profits. Through this automated advisory, farmers are able to access technical advisory for their pond instantly and more conveniently which further reduces dependency on technicians for any farm support. The company will also introduce interactivity, notification reminders and collaboration to its new feature in the next three months. The data will also help farmers to access formal finance from banks, have better risk mitigation with insurance and access to market linkage for their harvest produce which is not available in the present formal credit system for farmers. Aquaconnect is targeting to reach 4 lakh farmers to realize the benefit of the application.

Kerala: Fisheries Department constitutes committee for safety of fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fisheries-department-constitutes-committee-for-safety-of-fishers/article34963374.ece

"Increasing instances of fishing-related accidents at sea, particularly during the monsoons, and problems related to coastal security and illegal and unregulated fishing have prompted the State Fisheries Department to seek viable long-term solutions. The department has constituted a seven-member committee headed by P. Sahadevan, former additional director of fisheries, to study and submit a report on methods to resolve issues pertaining to safety at sea, coastal security and vessel monitoring systems (VMS) and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. The committee will analyse the "latest trends and internationally available options" as a part of its study, the department said. "The committee has already met twice and we expect to submit the report within a month," Anil Kumar S., deputy director of

fisheries, Kerala, who is a committee member, said. The committee also includes the Superintendent of Police (Marine Enforcement); Registrar, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS); the joint executive director, Agency For Development of Aquaculture (ADAK); and the joint director and assistant directors (projects) of the Fisheries Department.

Overriding concern Safety has become a matter of overriding concern with overfishing in the territorial waters prompting fishers to venture into the deep-sea regions. While it is essential to equip fishing vessels with sea safety equipment, fishermen seldom take it seriously, the Fisheries Department noted in a June 11 order constituting the panel. “Presently, only fishing boats owned by entrepreneurs are equipped with electronic safety aids. The incidents of fishermen going astray across the ocean, pulled away by strong currents and landing in neighbouring coastal countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan are not rare," according to the department. Porous coastline Further, a porous coastline poses a threat from the perspective of national security. "The current discourse is to consider the vast coastline as a 'border’ that needs to be protected as well as the land-locked frontiers. If such 'broken windows' continue to be unfixed, it would possibly be used by terrorists to mount symbolic attacks against nation's assets in peninsular India, including Kerala. An effective vessel monitoring and surveillance system in the State would help to resolve the issue to a fair extent," the department noted. IUU fishing thrives when the State lacks the capability to effectively monitor and control such activities. Moreover, such practices rob bona fide fishers, especially traditional fishermen, of marine resources, it observed.

Kerala: Panel formed to draft new fisheries policy

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/panel-formed-to-draft-new-fisheries-policy/article35002221.ece

"The State government has constituted an eight-member expert committee for preparing a new draft fisheries policy for the State. The panel headed by the Additional Director of Fisheries, Dineshan Cheruvat, has been tasked with revisiting the existing fisheries policy and drafting a new document "taking into consideration emerging challenges and latest developments in the sector with the aim of hastening the socio-economic development of the fishing community." The government has given the committee four months to prepare and submit the draft after due consultations with stakeholders. Among other things, the draft will suggest ways and means to improve efficiency in the fisheries sector to generate better income for fishermen and farmers through sustainable development. The new policy will give thrust to the development of aquaculture through integrated and eco-friendly farming methods, optimum utilisation of available water resources in the State, diversification of the species bred, ornamental fishery and disease surveillance.

The committee will look at the overall socio-economic upliftment of the coastal communities,

potential of alternate livelihood and employment generation, and fisheries-coastal tourism. The panel's terms of reference include the safety of fishermen at sea, disaster management, strengthening of cooperative sector in fisheries and various laws and regulations governing the sector. Further, in preparing the draft, the committee will also cover aspects related to marketing, value addition and quality assurance of fish and fish products.

Kerala: NGO asks govt. to initiate steps for coastal conservation

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/ngo-asks-govt-to-initiate-steps-for-coastal-conservation/article34942237.ece

"Blaming unscientific coastal structures for the worsening coastal erosion in Thiruvananthapuram district, the NGO Coastal Watch, Thiruvananthapuram, has urged the State government to abandon the Vizhinjam international seaport project and the move to construct more harbours and 'hard structures' such as seawalls and groynes. A Coastal Watch report, 'Displaced coastal communities: Problems and solutions', has blamed the breakwater being constructed for the Vizhinjam port for the severe erosion in the coastal villages north of it. Only a small portion of the breakwater has been completed, but even this has triggered unprecedented wave action in the adjacent fisheries harbour and the formation of a sandbar at its mouth, imperilling the lives of fishermen, notes the study and seeks a constructive review of the Rs. 5,300-crore package announced in the State Budget for coastal conservation. Vizhinjam portThe State should take steps to abandon the construction of the Vizhinjam port, which poses a major threat to the life and livelihood of the coastal community and to prevent further destruction," according to the study.

'Hard structures' such as groynes and breakwaters impede natural sediment transport and have proven to be short-term solutions to coastal protection. 'Soft structures' such as geotubes should be experimented with for coastal conservation, instead. Seawalls are harmful in the sense that they are weakened by the scouring of sand from its base. They also cause 'end erosion' in the coastal stretches on either side of it, the study noted. Calling for sustainable coastal protection measures, the Coastal Watch also advises against the use of concrete tetrapods that are now widely used. Further, the organisation has urged the government to scrap plans for new harbours.

Kerala: Fisherman dies as boat capsizes

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/fisherman-dies-as-boat-capsizes/articleshow/83791271.cms

A 58-year-old fisherman died on Wednesday after his boat capsized in the strong waves off the

coast of Mampally near Anchuthengu. Vincent of Kochu Kinattinmoodu House, Mampally, is the deceased. Anchuthengu coastal police have registered a case in connection with his death. According to the Anchuthengu coastal police, the mishap occurred around 5.45am on Wednesday. Vincent was part of a five-member group that set off for fishing in the boat, Paraloka Matha, owned by one Poulose. The other members of the group were Alphonse, Franklin, Theranyas and Dasan. All of them were residents of Mampally. Shortly after launching the boat from Mampally beach, they were hit by a giant wave. In the impact, the boat capsized and all the men were thrown into the turbulent water. While the other four men managed to swim to safety, Vincent, apparently suffering from exhaustion, was left behind. However, he was pulled out of the water by fishermen on other boats nearby. He was still alive when brought to the shore. But, he died shortly after reaching Chirayinkeezh Government District Hospital.

This is the third mishap reported in the Anchuthengu region in the past 10 days. The first death was of five-year-old Mohammed Shahabas, who was swept away by waves while standing close to the sea on June 15. His body washed ashore two days later. On June 18, a 19-year-old youth went missing after his boat capsized near Muthalappozhi breakwater, where Kadhinamkulam lake joined the Arabian sea. His body is yet to be found. Incidentally, all three mishaps have occurred while the District Collector has repeatedly been issuing warnings as the sea remains rough. The collector's warnings are based on the prediction by scientists of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) that the state's coastline would experience waves of height ranging from 2 to 2.5 meters.

Kerala: Fisher rehab strategy skewed, says report

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/jun/24/fisher-rehab-strategy-skewed-says-report-2320506.html

"The constant human intervention as a part of various developmental activities have led to coastal degradation affecting the fisherfolk adversely. The consequent rehabilitation of the fishers, however, has only displaced them from the coastal belt, which hampers their livelihood. Such a rehabilitation strategy must change and it is high time it was carried out by taking into account the priorities of the community, said a study by Coastal Watch, an NGO that focuses on the coastal belt of Thiruvananthapuram. In its report, 'Displaced coastal communities: Problems and solutions', the organisation has said that the families that are being rehabilitated should be considered as an 'ecosystem community' and they should be given suitable financial compensation proportional to the loss they are facing. The rehabilitation of the fisher community should only be carried out in such a way that their livelihood isn't affected, the report reiterates. Coastal degradation The report submitted to Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian points out how using hard structures for coastal protection are, in turn, detrimental to the

coastal belt and lead to further ecological damage. The construction of sea walls, groynes and tetrapods are to be avoided at any cost as these lead to various issues such as end erosion, which is the erosion of sand from beaches at either end of the seawall. The government needs to resort to soft structures such as geotubes, the study says.

The coastal protection measures and strategies should be formulated after understanding the unique beach system in an area. The NGO has asked the government to re-evaluate its project, 'Punargeham', to rehabilitate fishers living within 50 metres from the tidal area. Compensation not enoughAs per the state government's rehabilitation programme for fisherfolk, `10 lakh is being given to those living in coastal regions facing threat. This is inadequate," says Dr Tito D'Cruz, a fisheries expert who prepared the study report. The study has observed that most of the fishers who live in the coastal regions facing threat often do not come forward as they fear getting displaced to makeshift shelters when they are living in houses that are worth Rs 20 to Rs 50 lakh. Suitable compensation needs to be provided to those getting displaced and it is the right of the community to live in dignity. "The amount of `5,300 crore allocated in the budget for coastal protection through hard structures should be used for the rehabilitation of the fishers. When the fishers are rehabilitated, they need to be relocated near the coastal belt itself so that their livelihood isn't affected," he adds.

The fishers should get to live with dignity. "Wherever there have been human interventions like harbours, there has been coastal erosion. Whenever the fishers are rehabilitated, their needs aren't considered and are forced to move into flats. They should be relocated in a dignified manner where their livelihood isn't affected and not in shacks or slum-like areas. Any rehabilitation measure should ensure complete collaboration from the community," says Kerala Paristhithi Aikya Vedi convener Sridhar Radhakrishnan. He also reiterates the need to stop using hard structures. "A panel report led by marine scientist Dr Bijukumar and the community-based report by Dr Tito reiterate beach itself is the best coastal protection measure or rather sand. So we need to replenish the area with sand and this requires natural remedies and engineering. The thrust should be on bringing back our beaches," he adds. Study carried out by Coastal Watch asks govt to rehabilitate affected community near shores, rather than in faraway slum-like areas or flats, so that they are not denied livelihood. They must be given adequate compensation. Using hard structures to protect beaches/ shores will only aggravate erosion. Efforts must focus on replenishing sand on eroded beaches.

Kerala: Missing fishermen and sea erosion in coastal area

https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/13/20528/Missing-Fishermen-and-Sea-Erosion-in-Coastal-Kerala

"The sight on the beach at Poonthura, nine kilometres away from Thiruvananthapuram Central in Kerala, was ravishing. As they hurled their fishing nets, about 20 fishermen sang an

elegy to the ground beneath their feet, that was slowly being stolen by the sea. As they stood on the now 20-metre-wide beach, which was one km wide, 15 years back, they sang a folk song praising the sea mother and a chant to confound the fish they caught in the nets. “Three years ago, my son ventured into the sea like any other day, but he never came back,” sobbed Adalette Alcose, gazing at the Arabian sea. On a breezy day, as the waves came crashing in, the 75-years-old recounted the tragedy that occurred three years ago, in December, that left their coastal village bereft of countless fishermen; many dead, many missing. In the coastal town, countless people have similar stories. There are almost 40 fishermen from this coastal village still missing after the Ockhi cyclone that struck the coast in December 2017. The ramifications Ockhi brought with it did not stop with the casualties.

The cyclone has furthered sea erosion in the region. The sea has eaten into the once wide beach, the waves flood the houses when the monsoon arrives. “At the year-end, people make offerings in church for the dead people. Some women do not offer prayers for their missing family members with the hope that they might be stranded on some islands and will return someday,” said Herman Eldaphonse, a youth who had lost his uncle to the disaster. Poonthura has been facing neglect for a long time and it is one among a multitude of such towns in Kerala embroiled in these issues. The same stories resonate in Poonthura, Chellanam, Ponnani, other fisherfolk towns in the state. The locals were given lofty promises by politicians from the two main parties, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the United Democratic Front (UDF), for mitigating sea erosion and incursion. But nothing has come to fruition, said the locals. Bosco, a fisherman lamented about living in a constant state of fear for the loss of life and livelihood.

“There were measures like planting mangrove forests, building groynes, sea walls and geo-tubes to overcome sea erosion, but not even one of these were implemented. As the sea comes nearer to our homes, we have nowhere to go,” he said. The locals had asked for a mini harbour in the town for the past decade to reduce the force of the sea waves crashing in but to no avail. “All these years, we have faced nothing but neglect. If the fishermen lose their livelihood and this town, will people notice our wails?” Vizhinjam harbour has made the perils of sea incursion more prominent. “The water displaced after the harbour was set up is inundating our region,” said Herman Eldaphonse. With time, the sea has inched closer to the shore and has eroded the sea wall. The government has asked the locals to move to a different place, promising a sum of Rs 10 lakhs under the fisheries department’s Punargeham scheme.

Benjamin, living in a house in an area of three cents, with his yard, full of equipment for his boat, said, “I have worked so hard and now my three children are well educated, one of them will go to Canada for higher studies in a month or two. All this was possible with my income from fishing. What will Rs10 lakhs fetch me? How will I earn if I’m to desert the sea?” he said. The houses nearest to the sea are under the 50-metre distance and they are flooded during high tide. “The beach was wide enough for 100 fishermen to sell together with their catch 15 years

ago, now the width has dwindled," said Peraprais, a 55-year-old fisherman. The rehabilitation scheme for those affected by sea incursion is not welcomed by the locals. "The Rs 10 lakh provided by the government for rehabilitation is too less an amount. The sea is the life and livelihood for everyone here, who would leave it?" he said. Adequate measures like groynes for curbing the frequency and intensity of sea incursion and geo-tubes for combating erosion have not been built in Poonthura.

The demands were made since the coast was hit by cyclone Ockhi as the cyclone had aggravated sea incursion apart from the material damage and casualties. John Mathews, a fisherman and politician, who was a part of rescue operations during Kerala floods said, "Despite confronting neglect in the face of disasters, we don't turn our backs on people who need help." Mathews along with 7 others from the town travelled to Pathanamthitta district in the state after floods wreaked severe damage and casualties in the district. "We went to Pathanamthitta in 2018, but it was not with the hope that the favour will be returned. The collectorate had offered us Rs. 3000 for it, but most of us did not take it. The engines of our boats were damaged after that, but we did not seek any compensation," he said. Despite all the maladies striking them, people in Poonthura made news, not as the neglected lot, but as the lot creating a ruckus. The town bears little resemblance to the "misbehaving lot" picture, portrayed by the media. When the pandemic struck, the first case of community outbreak was reported here. Lockdown followed, 25 military personnel were deployed and the movement of the locals was closely monitored.

"The mayhem in this town was extensively covered by the media. The locals were seen coughing at the healthcare workers who came to collect samples and assembled with no regard to physical distancing," said Herman. "However, our hardships due to sea incursion and sea erosion seldom make the news," he said. Herman recollected an incident when his friends were taken into custody by police and were harassed after they told them they were natives of Poonthura. "Life is hard for us, especially after the pandemic. We are seen as the carriers of the disease, even though we fare better than other places in the district," Herman said. As natural calamities and constant bouts of classism strike the town, everyone turns a deaf ear at the stigma and sufferings borne by the locals.

Kerala: Support for small farmers: Biofloc gets major boost

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2021/jun/24/support-for-small-farmers-biofloc-gets-major-boost-2320497.html

"The state is coming to the aid of farmers whose livelihood was hit by the lockdown. Top officials at the fisheries department said they will soon invite applications from farmers to set up biofloc units. The one-year-old project was delayed by the pandemic. Nousher Khan, deputy director of fisheries in Ernakulam, said the project was implemented under the Subhiksha

Keralam project. More farmers have come forward and requested help to set up biofloc units on their compounds.Though there were more takers last year, we could install only 212 units in the district. There is a 40 per cent subsidy for farmers, of which one-third is from the fisheries department and two-thirds comes from local bodies," he says. "Farmers who do not have a pond of their own can also cultivate fish using this technology.

Last year, we cultivated Genetically Improved Farmed Tilapia (GIFT) in the units and it was a success," said Khan. "The important process is the development of floc like algae, fungus inside the tank. The farmer can harvest the yield twice a year,"he says. He added that technical advice is given to all takers who are new to it and both the state and Centre has projects for this. The Central government project is called Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. In Ernakulam alone, there are 50 units operational currently. Biofloc technology Biofloc technology was developed in the 1990s as a way for fish and shrimp farmers to conserve feed inputs and utilise wastewater during production. Producers could piggyback off the nitrogen cycle and let beneficial bacterial colonies proliferate in culture water. The bacterial growth (flocs) consume nitrogenous fish waste and toxic metabolites before the cultured species get to eat them. Subhiksha Keralam The Kerala Government's 'Subhiksha Keralam' project aims to combat food scarcity in the state. The Kerala state agriculture department has started converting fallow lands into farms.

Kerala: 617 fishermen receive government aid in Ernakulam

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kerala-617-fishermen-receive-government-aid-in-ernakulam/articleshow/83767972.cms

"The state fisheries department provided financial assistance to fishermen who have lost their livelihood during the Tauktae cyclone in Ernakulam on Tuesday. As many as 617 fishermen, including those residing in coastal areas and near inland waters, in Kuzhippilly panchayat were provided Rs 1,200 each as per the project announced by the fisheries department. K N Unnikrishnan, MLA from Vypeen, inaugurated the project and the money was transferred to the bank account of all the beneficiaries. As many as 16,067 families, including 9,992 active fisher families and 6,075 families related to fishing industry in Ernakulam, will be beneficiaries of the project. Unnikrishnan said that in Vypeen alone, there are 8,807 families who will receive the benefits. Due to the heavy rains and the winds during the cyclone, hundreds of fisher families suffered losses. The inaugural function held at Kuzhippilly panchayat hall was presided over by the panchayat president K S Nibin.

Kerala: Lockdown woes: Migrant workers at sea

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2021/jun/19/lockdown-woes-migrant-

workers-at-sea-in-kerala-2318383.html

"Though there was no mass return to home states unlike last year's lockdown, a large number of them, especially those employed by hotels, restaurants, shops and fishing sector, were rendered jobless. And families of many of them in their home states are on the verge of poverty. Muhammad Iqbal, 26, came to Kerala from his hometown of Allahabad (Prayagraj now) in Uttar Pradesh in 2018 with hopes of earning money to support his family which was on the verge of poverty. On Thursday when the state introduced the partial unlock, he was standing among hundreds of others at busy Kaloor Junction in Kochi waiting for someone to hire him for daily wage work. He stood there from 6.30am to 9.30am, but none offered him work. "I had worked as a barber in Palakkad and Aluva before moving to Kochi last year. As salons remained closed for over a month, I became jobless. I survived on my meagre savings for one month, but could not send any money home. Recently, the salon owner said he was shutting down due to financial issues.

Now, I have to look for a new job," said a worried Iqbal. As per the studies by various agencies, the estimated 30 lakh migrant workers are key drivers of the economy in Kerala. With the lockdown going on for over a month after similar curbs last year, migrant workers have been hit badly. The situation is worse for footloose migrant labourers. According to Binoy Peter, executive director of Centre for Migration and Inclusive Development (CMID), unlike last year, the impact of the recent lockdown on migrant workers was different in each sector. As some industries and construction activities were permitted, there was no huge panic return to their home states this year. "Taking a lesson from last year's lockdown, a majority of migrant workers stayed back in hope of finding some work. However, those employed by hotels, restaurants, shops and workshops have been jobless for over a month. The worst affected are people working in the fishing sector," Peter said. The annual estimated remittances from Kerala by migrant workers to their home states amount to `25,000 crore. According to Peter, CMID carried out a study in villages of Odisha on the remittances from other states including Kerala recently. The study revealed that over 60 per cent of families face severe poverty as remittances dropped following the second wave of Covid. "The same will be the situation in villages of West Bengal and Assam from where people in large numbers migrate to other states for work. Even in Kerala, businesses will have an impact if there is no money with migrant workers. In a place like Perumbavoor, shops get business mostly from migrant workers," he said.

However, experts like Peter also commended the welfare measures taken by the Kerala government. A top labour department official said over one lakh ration kits were distributed among migrant workers in the state. "Apart from ration kits, owners of small and medium enterprises also chipped in. Awareness programmes, especially through the helpline which communicated with migrant workers in their languages, succeeded in addressing their

concerns," she said. M M Mujeeb Rahman, president of Sawmill Owners and Plywood Manufacturers Association (SOPMA), fears that crisis days are ahead for the timber industry which may also hurt migrants. "The sector, especially plywood manufacture, is linked with the construction sector. As in Kerala, Covid has given a rude jolt to the construction sector in states like Karnataka and Maharashtra. We want the government to announce relief measures to tide over the crisis," he said.Though Kerala depends on the workforce from other states, the vaccination of migrant workers is going on at a snail's pace. "Multiple issues have contributed to this. First, there is a misconception among migrant workers about vaccination that it will affect their health in future. Similarly, several of them don't know how to book slots for vaccination. They are also not keen to visit hospitals as a working day will be lost," Peter said. The labour department official said, "We are coordinating with the health department to speed up vaccination among migrant workers. As they live in the densely populated housing facilities, there is a higher risk of Covid transmission."

Kerala: Differently-abled man who cleaned Kerala Lake gets International Award

https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/videos/differently-abled-man-who-cleaned-kerala-lake-gets-international-award

"69-year-old N S Rajappan, paralysed below his knees, has been honoured by a top award in Taiwan for his commitment to cleanliness by way of collecting plastic waste from Kerala's scenic Vembanad Lake despite his disability. He has been awarded The Supreme Master Ching Hai International's World Protection Award which also comes with a $ 10,000 (approximately Rs 7,30,081) cash award and a citation. Rajappan who crawls with his hands makes a living by collecting plastic bottles and other garbage from the lake. He has been doing it for the past 17 years. Rajappan's work must be looked as a role model and by way of protecting the rivers, we are trying to save the earth itself, the citation states. Rajappan's story went viral earlier this year after photographer Nandu posted his pictures on social media. On January 14 this year, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) chief Erik Solheim too had shared a brief video on Rajappan on social media, along with a request that 'we should make him famous'. According to the media reports, Rajappan was afflicted with polio at the age of five and has been paralysed since. But he would venture out to the waterbodies in and around Kumarakom on a small country boat to collect plastic every day, early in the morning. He mainly collects plastic bottles dumped in the water. The plastic thus collected is cleaned and dried before being sold to a local agency at Rs.12 a kilogram.

Kerala: Work on boat-building yard to take off soon

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/work-on-boat-building-yard-to-take-off-soon/article34862991.ece

"The construction of a boat building yard at Sakthikulangara, one major project announced in connection with the upgradation of harbours in Kollam, is expected to take off shortly. “The work will start within 1.5 months,” Fisheries Minister Saji Cheiyan said after visiting the Sakthikulangara, Neendakara and Azheekkal harbours in the district recently. After assessing the progress of various works and interacting with officials from Fisheries and Harbour Engineering Departments, Mr. Cherian said all harbours in the State would be given a facelift on par with global standards. “Apart from the boat building yard, a new initiative will be launched at the space adjacent to it under the Fisheries Department. It will provide employment to nearly 100 persons,” he said. A fishnet manufacturing unit at Neendakara and a modern auction hall offering all varieties of fish are also part of the project. Modern makeover At the Neendakara harbour, a major fish landing centre in the district, the wharf will be renovated. Laying of geo bags to prevent sedimentation, a new shopping area, CCTV installation, and a string of new constructions, are expected to give the harbour a modern makeover. A number of new facilities will come up in Sakthikulangara. The finger jetty and net mending shed are the new additions along with the entrance gate and gate house. The Azheekkal harbour, which has minimal landing facilities, will be renovated with a 100-metre wharf and new auction hall.

Kerala: Farmers see hope in biofloc fish farming

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/farmers-see-hope-in-biofloc-fish-farming/articleshow/83616847.cms

"Biofloc fish farming, which has set trends in the pisciculture industry, has started gaining popularity among the rural farmers in the district. M S Rafi, a ward member of Madavoor panchayat and a farmer, has launched biofloc fish farming in connection with the Janakeeya Matsyakrishi project of the state government. The biofloc farming has been set up on 10 cents. The profitable method of fish farming is being practised in four tanks which are of four diameter size. By rearing 1,000 fishes each in a tank, Rafi rears a total of 4,000 genetically improved farmed (GIFT) tilapia fish. According to him, the culture period of farming is six months. “After six months, we expect to harvest fish weighing 400-500g each. Probably, we will be selling the yield in the local market,” said Rafi. “Besides the family support, officials of the fisheries department provide essential regulations to be followed in the farming,” said Rafi. “As it requires less water, land and feed, Biofloc farming technology is the best option for people aiming at commercial fish farming,” he added. Biofloc farming system, promoted by the fisheries department, is considered sustainable and eco-friendly. Mostly in aquaculture, the farmers find it difficult to meet certain costly factors, including the availability of land, water and high-quality feeding. Biofloc farming poses solutions to all these issues faced by the farmers. The farming system, which facilitates recycling and reusing of nutrients in the culture medium, is benefited by the limited or zero water exchange. Most importantly, the system

reduces the utilization of protein-rich feed and the cost of standard feed.

Kerala: Mini fishing harbour to be partially opened

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/mini-fishing-harbour-to-be-partially-opened/article34808215.ece

"The Chellanam mini fishing harbour will open partially on Monday after a gap of about two months. There are around 250 fishing boats, all of them small boats manned by traditional fishers, that come from areas like Arthunkal, Ottamassery, Andharkaranazhi, and Azheekkal. The prolonged closure of the harbour, loss of fishing days due to weather warnings, and COVID-19 lockdown had put fishers in serious financial trouble. Many of them had taken up other works, including joining the pool of autorickshaw drivers, for survival, said P.A. Charles, a fisherman who had left the harbour work during the pandemic. Boats will venture out for fishing on the basis of their registration, with alternate days being allotted to them. They will go only short distances in view of heavy rain and rough seas.

They will mostly be within the mobile phone range and fishing trips will last only about three to four hours. The rapid spread of COVID-19 and the high test positivity rate had forced the closure of the mini fishing harbour in the early weeks of May. Besides the loss of fishing days, fishers had also sustained damage to their boats and gear in heavy rain induced by cyclonic storms off the coast of Kerala. Cyclone Tauktae had caused most of the damage to fishing boats. V.D. Majeendran of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation said monsoon season was a peak time for traditional fishers as trawling boat operations remained suspended. Bulk of the catch for traditional boat operators come in the brief window of time during the rainy season, he added.

Kerala : India's first licensed fisherwoman now collecting oyster to make ends meet

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/offbeat/india-s-first-licensed-fisherwoman-now-collecting-oyster-to-make-ends-meet-1.5751812

"Rekha, the first and only woman who obtained a deep sea fishing license in India, is now making a living by collecting oyster from the shore. She earns Rs 60 for a large basket full of oyster shells. She manages to take care of her family including husband and four daughters with this job. 'On some days, I keep searching in the sea for many hours but would not be able to fill even one basket,' the 40-year-old woman said. Her life took a different turn after her

husband Karthikeyan developed a heart disease. Rain havoc, trawling ban and lockdown also were barriers for her. When Rekha obtained deep sea fishing license in 2016, it had made headlines in the national media. She accompanied her husband while fishing in the deep sea and was hailed as a symbol of women empowerment and dignity of labour. Rekha's house is located at Ethayi in Engandiyoor in Chettuva. The house is always under threat of high tides and rough sea. However, the family still lives there. Hailing from Koorkenchery in Thrissur, Rekha shifted to the coastal area after marrying Karthikeyan, a fisherman. She had completed Plus Two and Hindi Vidwan course before marriage.

Though she was not familiar with sea before wedding, it became part of life later. For deep sea fishing, they have to move at least 50 kilometres in the sea. There should be minimum 3 people in the boat. Rekha's husband and a helper will be in the boat with her. Meanwhile, Karthikeyan was diagnosed with heart disease and fishing was stopped as per the doctor's direction. They arranged surgery and treatment at Kottayam medical college. But the surgery was postponed after the second wave of pandemic intensified. Rekha and Karthikeyan have four daughters. Eldest one Maya was married off. Anjali, Devapriya and Lakshmipriya are the younger ones.

Kerala: Traditional fishers find the going tough

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/traditional-fishers-find-the-going-tough/article34836327.ece

"With pelagic catch hitting an all-time low and various COVID-19 related curbs in place, traditional fishers are staring at a prolonged dry spell. Normally fishers in the traditional sector look forward to June when the trawl ban is in place and the monsoon currents offer a good harvest. But this year they have been hit hard by multiple factors, including erratic weather and strict clampdowns at harbours. “After hitting the rock bottom during the last several months, we had pinned all our hopes on this season. But we could venture into the sea only once since the ban came into effect,” says Harikumar, a fisher from Alappad. 65 working days Instead of the regular 200 to 250 days, the fishers got hardly 65 working days last year and now, many days into the peak season, their plight continues. “We usually come back with huge hauls of sardine, mackerel, and shrimps, but now the season is too dull. Apart from a reasonable catch of shrimp from Alappuzha, none of the boats that ventured into the sea from the southern coast made a profitable trip in the past two weeks,” says Ansari from Punthura. The season in 2021 began with rough sea alerts restricting all fishing activities and lockdown on the weekends. The revised COVID-19 guidelines and repeated weather warnings often create confusion among the fishers and in many places cases were filed against boat owners.

Alternate days In Kollam, the biggest fish landing centre in the State, crafts can venture into the sea only on alternate days. “Boats that return with nearly-zero catch can't touch waters the next day due to this and some get only two working days a week. When the harbours were reopened

last month, antigen tests were made mandatory to enter. Many of us had to take the test at private hospitals as the government facilities were insufficient. When fishing villages or harbours fall into the list of containment zones, a lot of people are denied the opportunity to work," adds Harikumar. Since the trawl ban along the east coast came to an end this week, there will be a huge inflow of fish to the State from Tamil Nadu, posing another challenge to the fishers.There will be an abundance of fish in markets as trucks from Tamil Nadu reach Kerala much earlier than we return with the day's catch," says Jackson Pollayil, president, Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation. He also points out that harbour management societies that were expected to regulate all activities in harbours are now dysfunctional in many districts. After the 2020 lockdown, the societies had taken over marketing and distribution much to the relief of fishers. Sabotaged "Private lobbies have sabotaged the system and we are forced to pay commission. Though the government had promised freezer facilities, nothing materialised. And instead of helping the fishers in distribution, Matsyafed is now functioning more like a microfinance unit offering loans. The Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board is also a failure compared to other boards when it comes to offering support," he says.

Kerala: Reservoirs in Pathanamthitta to host fish farms

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/reservoirs-in-pathanamthitta-to-host-fish-farms/article34816686.ece

"Commercial fishery is not an occupation one would normally associate with the people living on the high-ranges of Pathanamathitta. The sector, however, looks set to gain a foothold along the forest-fringe villages here, thanks to a novel community initiative. Starting from September, a group of 100 people from the Scheduled Tribe community in Seethathodu village will open aquaculture farms inside the sprawling reservoir of the Kakki dam in the Sabarimala forests. The initiative, being implemented by the Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala, will be expanded to other reservoirs in the district in a phased manner. According to officials, the project envisages commercial production of fish through cage farming system. As many as 100 cages, each having a length of six meters and a width of four meters, will be set up inside the reservoir. The hives will contain 3000 fish-lings each and the harvest will be held twice in a year. "The fish harvested from the dam will be sold through the stalls to be opened through the stalls to be opened by the Matsyafed under the brand name 'Konni Fish'," said K.U.Janeesh Kumar, Konni MLA.

The Seethathodu panchayat and the Forest Department had been tasked to identify the beneficiaries of the project, who would be receiving a daily income of ?400 and proceeds from the fish sales, he added. The Fisheries Department will provide the farmers technical guidance and the logistical support for transporting fish to the local market. As part of implementing the project, a meeting of the project monitoring committee comprising of Fisheries, Panchayat,

Forest, KSEB, and Dam Safety sections was held here the other day. The committee, led by the MLA, also conducted a joint inspection of the reservoir to determine the locations for depositing the cages. Officials said the farms were expected to fetch around 125 tonnes of fish in the first phase.

Kerala: Blue economy plans beset with practical difficulties, say experts

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/blue-economy-plans-beset-with-practical-difficulties-say-experts/article34823485.ece

"Experts speaking on the proposals contained in the blue economy plans of the Union government called for caution while implementing them as the protection of traditional fishers' rights and harmonisation of all aspects of the sea are linked to it. Dr. N.G.K. Pillai, former head of the Pelagic Division of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi, said that blue economy is a concept being discussed since the early 1990s. Developed countries like the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Norway, etc. have embraced the idea, the focus and core of which is sustainability. However, he expressed concern over the possibility of undeterred quarrying or mining for resources, especially on the Kerala coast, which is rich in rare earth elements. Dr. Sunil K. Mohammed, former principal scientist and head of the molluscan fisheries and mariculture at CMFRI, said that the idea behind the blue economy proposals was the harmonisation of all aspects of the sea. For instance, he said, shipping activities should in no way infringe on fishing activities.

However, this is not the case now in the country. He cited the recent notification of the shipping channel. The channel passes through several fishing grounds off the country's coast, he pointed out. He also expressed concern over multiple legislation governing marine resources. For instance, he raised the issue of coastal regulation zone rules and their connection to the blue economy proposals. He felt that every aspect appeared to have been compartmentalised instead of being harmonised. 'Corporatisation' Veteran fishers' union leader and convener of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi Charles George said that blue economy proposals were the first step towards corporatisation of marine resources. He criticised the government for not allowing sufficient time for the public to file suggestions and raise their objections on the draft of the blue economy policy. Hibi Eden, MP, in a recent letter to the Union Minister for Fisheries Giriraj Singh, had said that there was a "mysterious hurry displayed by the government to curtail deliberations" on the blue economy proposals. The policy, he had said, would have ramifications on the livelihood of the most vulnerable sections of society in the country and called for consultations and discussions on the proposals as the policy raised grave concerns about the future of the fishing community.

Kerala: Compensation a relief but fishermen still under threat: Wife of victim killed by

Italian marines

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/jun/16/compensation-a-relief-but-fishermen-stillunder-threat-wife-of-victim-killed-by-italian-marines-2316809.html

"“The government should ensure security to the lives of fisherfolk who can come under similar attacks in the sea. Giving compensation won’t pay for the lost life and it doesn’t mean that such incidents will not recur,” said Dora, wife of Valentine Jalastine, one of the two Indians killed my Italian Marines on Italian ship Enrica Lexie, in the wake of the Supreme Court’s verdict. The SC on Tuesday quashed the criminal proceedings pending in India against the two Italian Marines for the 2012 sea-firing incident near Kerala coast which killed the Indian fishermen by accepting the compensation of K10 crore deposited by Italy. “Though it took many years, I am happy that at least the compensation will lift the financial burden that my family and I have been facing after my husband’s death,” Dora told TNIE. She said in the initial days, they had received some compensation but that was not enough to run the family and bring up her two children alone. “As my husband was the lone breadwinner of the family and my children were young when the incident happened, I had gone through a lot of difficulties in bringing them up. No fisherman’s family should meet my fate.”

Dora was provided with a job by the state government in the fisheries department in compensation after her husband’s death. The couple has two children — Derrick Valentine, 27, and Jeen Valentine, 19. Derrick has completed his engineering graduation and is looking for a job and Jeen is pursuing BCom. Jalastine, who belonged to Neendakara in Kollam, and Ajesh Pink, who hailed from Colachel in Kanyakumari district, were killed when the marines -- Massimiliano Lattore and Salvatore Girone -- on board Enrica Lexie opened fire on their fishing boat, St Antony, off Alappuzha coast on February 15, 2012, mistaking them for pirates. Fishermen upset with govts The Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) said the SC verdict in the sensational case was not in favour of India and it is an injustice towards the fishermen community. The main demand of the community was to prosecute the marines on charges of murder. But the successive governments in India have adopted a policy of protecting the Italian soldiers, said KSMTF state president Jackson Pollayil. The Central and state governments should have taken steps to ensure the safety of fishermen and their boats in the sea, said Jackson.

Kerala: Sea surge on Kerala coast: Why experts are calling for nature-based solutions

https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/sea-surge-on-kerala-coast-why-experts-are-calling-for-nature-based-solutions-77431

"Kerala’s 590-kilometre-long coastline — one of the most densely populated in India and exposed to rogue waves — has for long been susceptible to large-scale sea erosion. The

Pinarayi Vijayan-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) government has adopted traditional measures such as seawalls and breakwaters to brace against the perceptible impacts of climate change. But there are reasons to believe they may not save the state from the rising seas. A recent study has flagged the possibility of coastal areas in the state witnessing an increasing trend of sea surge in the coming years, mainly due to the rise in sea surface temperature. The scientists have advocated for nature-based solutions, in such a case, involving active participation of residents of the coastal communities. Seawalls are walls or embankments erected to prevent the sea encroaching on or eroding an area of land. The scientists involved in the study termed the present practice of erecting granite seawalls as counter-productive. They emphasised that mineral sand mining — rampant in coastal areas of Kollam, Alappuzha, and Ernakulam districts — be confined to public sector with strict monitoring amid numerous complaints of illegal extraction of mineral sand by private agencies. They urged the state government to focus on protecting and promoting mudflats, coastal wetlands, mangroves and sandy beaches to prevent further escalation of sea erosion, which has gained alarming proportions even before the onset of south-west monsoon.

The study flagged the need for participatory seashore management and a coastal erosion map. The joint study was conducted by: - A Biju Kumar (Professor and head of department, Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala) - KV Thomas (retired chief scientist and head of National Centre for Earth Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram) - Ajayakumar Varma (retired chief scientist and head of Natural Resources and Environmental Management wing of National Centre for Earth Sciences, Thiruvananthapuram) - E Shaji (associate professor and head, Department of Geology, University of Kerala) - TV Sajeev (senior principal scientist, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi) Restore mangrove forests The increasing calamities faced by the coastal community has elicited the need to restore coastal vegetation, including mangrove forestation, which could act as a bio-shield to the coastal belt, Sanjeev told Down to Earth. K V Thomas said: “More than 0.6 million people of Kerala are directly dependent on the sea for their livelihood. There is a vast segment that indirectly relies on the sea by way of fisheries, tourism, transport of goods and people, aquaculture, energy, materials for biotechnology, minerals, and metals. The sea and the seashore are the most threatened areas during the Anthropocene. The current and predicted climate change impacts threaten the very existence of seashore communities.”

He added that the most impacted communities in Kerala — bordered by the Western Ghats on the east and the Lakshadweep Sea on the west — live at the ecotone of land and the sea. This calls for urgent intervention of the state government. Seashore erosion has worsened coastal ecological balance and we need to evolve better solutions based on nature and in tune with the integrated development of Kerala, he added. The coastline has also been subjected to environmental dynamics of the past several thousand years that eventually led to the formation of a wide range of geomorphological features such as backwaters, bays, lagoons, salt marshes,

sand dunes and sandy shores, said Thomas. The study noted:Among the 44 rivers originating from Kerala in the Western Ghats, 41 empty into the Lakshadweep sea. The average distance between the seas and the Western Ghats is 55-56 km. The backwaters, formed when the seawater pushes back the river as it reaches from the plains into shallow areas, is a unique characteristic of Kerala. The vagaries of the sea level and beach barrier formed perpendicular to the shore that led to the formation of the backwaters like Vembanad, India's largest backwater ecosystem.

The nutrient richness of the shallow seas in Kerala is due to the nutrients and organic matter brought by the rivers through the estuaries…" The ocean currents — in tune with the winds that bring cold, nutrient-rich water, which upwells in the Kerala coast — make the seashore productive, thereby ensuring good fish biomass. Residents thrive by extracting resources from nature around them and are tied to the ecosystems they live in. Any damage to the ecosystem will be at the cost of their livelihood, the study warned. The seashore degradation started in Kerala in the 1950s, primarily due to unscientific constructions in the seashore, said Biju Kumar. "The constructions comprising mostly harbour breakwaters ignored the ecotone landscape's dynamic nature. The beach nourishment systems adopted the world over during the construction of harbours was not implemented." Hard armouring structures such as the seawall have been presented as the only solution to degradation; but they have only aggravated the issue. The degradation of rivers — that brought sand and sediments to maintain the seashore — also worsened the situation.

"The life of the lowland people became a rope walk between the sea and the land, and many lost their homes and livelihood, said Kumar. He warned that the tourism industry has shifted to inland backwaters and the Western Ghats from the shoreless seashore. The increasing number of hurricanes in the Arabian sea and the rising sea level may aggravate the situation. The seashore is maintained by the continuous process of accretion and erosion, according to the researchers.

According to them: The 'room for seashore' must be taken up as an immediate slogan, they said. The decision to leave 50 meters distance from the shoreline for the sea to ensure the stability of beaches must be strictly enforced. The study suggested preparing a list of hotspots based on available studies on seashore erosion and field verification reports reported by local self-governments. Based on the intensity of erosion, the seashore should be classified as: - Severely eroded seashore (where the erosion is intense and no management method is possible) - Highly eroded seashore (where erosion is intense but management is possible) - Moderately eroded seashore - Slightly eroded seashore - Seashore prone to erosion - Erosion-free seashore.

The way ahead According to Sajeev, the current breakwater and seawall constructions have

worsened the sea erosion scenario. Better structural features are needed for seashore maintenance after careful study of the current status. Beach nourishment methods and sand bypassing should be considered wherever possible, after site-specific studies, considering coastal geomorphology and dynamics.

“India is envisaging an integrated coastal zone management project. Local-level participatory coastal zone management projects should be implemented as part of this. The district-level management committees should lead these projects,” observed E Shaji. Among other suggestions were: - A coordination committee headed by the chief minister to complete the projects in a time-bound manner. - Institutions like KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration) should conduct training for local self-government representatives using the expertise available at NCESS, KFRI, CWRDM, Universities, and Geology, Marine Sciences, Ecology, etc. - The green army, civil society organizations, and citizen scientists should also be used to prepare local-specific coastal zone management plans. - A coastal zone monitoring network should link civil society groups, environmental activists and link all local self-government in the coastal zone to monitor violations of the coastal zone management Act. - Ecosystem services of the coastal zone should be assessed and sustainable management plans should be developed and implemented through integrative research. - The researchers said mining of the strategically important mineral sand should be regulated strictly and should be done only by the public sector. Mudflats, coastal wetlands, mangroves, and sandy beaches should be declared as Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1. Dredging will be necessary at ports. It has to be made sure that the mud and soil excavated are not used to reclamation coastal wetlands. Sand mining should be prohibited at the hotspots. There should be a reliable enforcement mechanism for this. Shores, where the Olive Ridley turtles lay eggs, should be protected. “Studies based on predictive models should be started to develop better coastal zone management. Nature-based solutions should be used to prepare green belts at the coastal buffer zone, and the activities should be linked to Rural Employment Guarantee programs and programs schemes,” said Thomas. Meanwhile, a webinar organized by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in Kochi also suggested similar steps. The webinar highlighted that the entire Kerala coast recently witnessed a ‘storm surge’ during the two cyclones — Tauktae and Yaas. “Kerala’s coastal region could be protected from the wrath of the sea to a great extent through the restoration of mangroves and other biodiversity in the region,” said CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan when contacted by Down to Earth.

Kerala: Plea to ensure safety of deep-sea fishers, vessels

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/plea-to-ensure-safety-of-deep-sea-fishers-vessels/article34770921.ece

"All India Deep Sea Fishers’ Association has appealed to the government to ensure the

safety of deep-sea fishers in the light of the recent series of accidents and loss of lives and fishing boats. In a memorandum submitted to Fisheries Minister Saji Cherian, the association listed a few recent accidents, including the one in which fishing vessel Andavan Thunai, which ventured out from Kochi on April 29, was caught in the cyclonic storm Tauktae and sank off the Lakshadweep islands on May 14. Fishers on two boats had witnessed the accident. However, there were misleading reports in a section of the media that the fishers in the vessel had returned safe though there is no news of them as of now. In another incident, Ajmer Shah, a boat that left the Beypore harbour on May 5 was lost in the sea, and search operations are still on. Six boats and 69 fishermen on them, which left Kochi and were caught in cyclone Ockhi are still missing. Under these circumstances, the authorities must step in to provide the latest communication and safety equipment to the fishing community. All fishing vessels should be monitored strictly to ensure their safety, the association said. It also demanded that the dormitory at the Thoppumpady fishing harbour be repaired immediately, and that its maintenance and management be handed over to workers' groups.

Kerala: 52-day trawling ban begins tonight

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/52-day-trawling-ban-begins-tonight/article34764388.ece

"The 52-day ban on trawling, which begins on Thursday midnight and ends on July 31 midnight, will see over 3,600 trawlers off the Kerala waters as the fishers brace for another season of hardship. All boats from outside Kerala, numbering around 800, according the Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association, have been ordered to leave the State by the time the ban begins. A 24-hour control room has been opened at the Vypeen fisheries station for fishers' safety operations. Besides, a marine ambulance and two patrol boats will be in operation. All diesel bunkers along the coast and in the fishing harbours will be closed. Inboard engine boats will get their fuel supply from Matsyafed-run bunkers and designated other outlets. Fisheries Department authorities have warned against juvenile fishing while officials of the Food Safety And Standards Authority will take action against those selling fish contaminated by chemicals.

Free ration Fishers and workers in shrimp peeling and fish processing units who will lose their income during the ban period will be provided free rations and the workers have been directed to submit their applications through their respective Matsya Bhavans. Inboard engine vessels going out for fishing during the trawling ban season will be allowed only one carrier boat. Details of the boats and carrier boats have to be submitted to the respective fisheries offices. Traditional fishers, who venture out during the trawling ban season, have been instructed to carry biometric identification cards and safety equipment. Annual ban The period of the annual trawling ban was extended from 45 to 52 days last year despite the traditional sector seeking a longer period of trawling ban. The Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation and

Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi had wanted longer periods while the trawl boat operators had pointed to substantial losses in fishing days during 2020 and 2021. The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators had said that the 52-day trawling ban came into effect in addition to the large number of days that had been lost due to the pandemic spread as well as bad weather warning.

Kerala: Fishing sector caught between lockdown and unkind govts

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/jun/09/sector-caught-between-lockdown-unkind-govts-2313507.html

"""This is the worst misfortune we ever encountered. It is very difficult to claw back to normal life. We are not thinking of suicide as it is against our religion," said Mohammed Haneefa Haji, a fishing boat owner at Beypore, holding a bunch of attachment notices served by banks. "I have six fishing boats and three of them are financed by banks. Everything went normal till the announcement of lockdown in March 2020. If one boat doesn't get enough fish another will compensate and I could repay the loan EMI on time. However, we are not able to operate for the past 15 months and there is no income. The authorities talk about a moratorium but the banks don't bother. I had pledged my house as surety for the loan and the banks may attach it any time," said Haneefa Haji in a broken voice. This is not a one-off incident. The crisis triggered by lockdown has turned catastrophic for the fishing sector. Around 95 per cent of the mechanised fishing boat owners, traditional fishermen, vendors, fish processing unit owners and exporters are facing an unprecedented crisis.

"The price of diesel has touched Rs 93 per litre. For a week-long fishing expedition, we need diesel worth Rs 5 lakh. The wages, daily bata, ice blocks and food supplies are other expenses. The repair and maintenance of boats and fishing gear are additional expenses. We should get a catch worth Rs 8 lakh to get some returns, which is only a dream nowadays. Last year we operated boats for just sixty days and this year there is no improvement," said Munambam - Vypin Fishing Sector Protection Committee chairman P P Gireesh. The fishing boat operators association has approached the Union Fishing Ministry demanding to include diesel under the GST regime. "The biggest challenge is the rising price of diesel now. Besides the anti-fishermen attitude of the Kerala government has added to the crisis. While the annual license fee in neighbouring states like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is only Rs 3,500, it is Rs 52,000 in Kerala. Besides, the fisheries authorities impose a hefty fine in the name of juvenile fishing. If the situation continues the fishing industry may migrate to other states," said Gireesh. Loan sharks prey on traditional fishermen the situation is even more pathetic in the traditional fishing sector, which is the livelihood of 10 lakh people. ""We had availed a Rs 6 lakh bank loan to purchase a motorised country craft worth Rs 12 lakh. We are not able to venture into the sea due to the lockdown restrictions. The bank may attach out property any time," said Shaji, a fisherman at Arthungal in Alappuzha.

The fishermen had repaired their boats ahead of monsoon fishing season, but the harbours are declared containment zones and they are not able to venture into the sea. “The fishermen in Arthungal have to go to Vypin in Ernakulam district to launch their boats as there is no harbour in Alappuzha district. They hire trucks to take the craft to Vypin, but the police stop them and slap hefty fine in the name of lockdown. The government has provided kits, but is it enough to survive? We need money to meet our medical expenses,” said Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation Alappuzha district president Raju Asrayam. The biggest menace in the coastal hamlets is the exploitation by loan sharks. Most of the fishermen have taken loans from auctioneers who take away a portion of the daily catch and collect exorbitant rates of interest. As the catch and prices fluctuate, the fishermen are forced to depend on private money lenders. “The fishermen in Alappuzha got a good catch of shrimps on Monday. However, the prices plunge from Rs 250 per kg to Rs 110 per kg. There is no demand for fish due to the lockdown. We have urged the government to provide some monetary support through the Fishermen Welfare Board,” said Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation state president Jackson Pollayil.

Export sector in shambles The fish processing and export sector have incurred huge loss due to the global lockdown that has disrupted supply chains. Many fish processing units in Kochi are on the verge of shutdown unable to bear the mounting losses. “There is a steep decline in the availability of fish as almost all the harbours are closed. The peeling units have been shut and the processing units are forced to store raw fish. The hopes of revival have suffered a blow as many of the buyers are bankrupt and have shut down their units. We have to find new buyers to restore business after the lockdown,” said Seafood Exporters Association of India Kerala region president Alex K Ninan. The exports have been affected by the steep rise in freight charges, which went up to Rs 7.5 lakh per container from Rs 2.5 lakh in November 2020. As the export turnover has come down, the banks are refusing to renew credit facilities to the units. The banks have started threatening to declare the loan accounts of exporters as nonperforming assets (NPA). “We have approached the Union Commerce ministry seeking to declare a moratorium on loans. Many processing and export units have incurred huge losses and are struggling to survive,” he said.

Kerala: Budget gives a boost to coastal protection initiatives

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/budget-gives-a-boost-to-coastal-protection-initiatives/article34739536.ece

"Efforts to protect the nearly 600-km Kerala coast and people living on the coast may witness a sea change, with the revised Budget for 2021-22 promising to tap into local knowledge, leverage green solutions, and adopt the latest engineering techniques for the purpose even as the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) is set to finalise plans to establish a major mangrove research and propagation station. Coastal area conservation

measures will be formulated to integrate new technologies and green solutions like mangrove vegetation, said Minister for Finance K.N. Balagopal in the Assembly on Friday. On utilising the knowledge of the local people and addressing their concerns, the Minister said: “Extensive stakeholder consultations will be conducted with local participation before finalising designs. For this, the views of community organisations working in coastal areas will be sought with the assistance of the Local Self-Government and Fisheries departments.”

Going by the experience of the local people, green cover along the coast can help prevent sea erosion in places like Chellanam. K.K. Rarghuraj of Kufos, an expert in mangroves, had said at a recent consultative meeting on Chellanam that the segment of the coast between Fort Kochi and Chellanam lacked substantial beach formation. Beaches are needed to grow mangroves and provide bioshield protection to the coast. Kufos Vice Chancellor Riji K. John said the proposal for establishing an international centre of excellence in mangrove research and development was being finalised. Once operational, the Rs.100-crore station will combine the vast resources available with Kufos for propagation of mangroves by providing knowledge backup as well as seeds and tissue-cultured plants. The facility is slated to come up on 50 acres at the fisheries station of the varsity on Puthuvype island. A meeting of environmental and fisheries scientists in Kochi in May 2019 had proposed the setting up of such a facility. The task was then taken up by A. Ramachandran, then Vice Chancellor. The final proposal will be submitted soon to the Fisheries Minister, Dr. John said.

He added that mangrove growth along the coast would not only help protect it but also, in places like Kochi, help lower temperature and increase oxygen availability in the atmosphere. Mangroves are also natural homes to dozens of local species of fish and crabs as well as migratory birds. Kerala has 15 mangrove plant varieties as well as 75 associated plants. Of them, 12 varieties and 66 associated plants are available at the Kufos fisheries station. The proposed research station will be a germplasm bank for the rich variety of mangrove vegetation in the State.

Kerala: Fishing community unhappy with budget

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fishing-community-unhappy-with-budget/articleshow/83266122.cms

"Fishermen unions have been disappointed with the revised budget which, they said, did not have any major announcements for the sector. Finance minister K N Balagopal has allocated Rs 5 crore for building infrastructure facilities for fish processing considering the possibilities for making value-added products. Officials in the fisheries department said alternative modes of employment related to fishing are envisaged in the crisis-ridden sector. “Projects for self-help groups in the community are already addressing the welfare of fisherwomen. Employment opportunities are being generated for children of fishermen who

have graduated from colleges," said an official of the department. In the budget presented a few months ago, the state had announced a scheme to supply kerosene with a subsidy of Rs 25 per litre at a total allocation of Rs 60 crore. The traditional fishermen are operating their fishing crafts having out-board motors which use kerosene as fuel. The quantity of kerosene available under the PDS system is very limited and fishermen depend on middlemen for kerosene, often at exorbitant rates.Matsyafed has implemented a scheme to supply subsidized white kerosene with a subsidy of Rs 25 per litre. This has resulted in the reduction of operating expenses," said Lawrence Harold, managing director, Matsyfed.

However, fishermen unions are a dissatisfied lot. "The trade unions led by Left parties themselves had urged the Centre to provide Rs 7,500 per month to each community member as financial aid to the unorganized sector affected by Covid. We are facing starvation. The fisheries sector has been reeling under losses due to the fall in marine catch, especially Indian oil sardines from 2012-2017. This was at a time when there were 120 fishing days in a year. Against that, last year there were hardly 40 days because of Covid restrictions and extreme rainfall and cyclones. From January 1, 2021, not a single inboard vessel has gone fishing," said Charles George, state president, Kerala fish workers forum. In his budget speech, finance minister said the present NDA government has been trying to take away the controlling rights of state governments over the coastal sea.

Kerala: Off-shore breakwater project: Fishing community apprehensive

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/jun/04/off-shore-breakwater-project-fishing-community-apprehensive-2311401.html

"The fisherman community has raised apprehensions on the upcoming off-shore breakwater project and the plan to use geo tube technology for coastal protection. A section of the fishermen has taken it up with the chief minister and fisheries minister urging the government to rethink their plan and carry out proper study before constructing offshore breakwaters using geo tube for protecting shorelines. Trivandrum Kambavala Matsya Thozhilali Federation president Tony Oliver said that offshore breakwater projects implemented in other places were not successful. "The state government should have a rethink on the offshore breakwater project which is estimated to cost around Rs 19 crores. The offshore breakwater system implemented by the National Institute of Ocean Technology in Tamil Nadu was a total failure. The government shouldn't waste money on such an impractical project which would destroy the livelihood of thousands of fishermen," said Tony. He said that ever since the launch of the Vizhinjam Port Project, around 250 metres of shoreline from Poonthura to Cheriyathura were lost. "Groynes constructed along Poonthura - Cheriyathura have proven to be effective and the government should extend groyne construction instead of offshore

breakwater projects.

Instead of experimenting the authorities should extend the groyne construction from Cheriyathura to Veli and protect the livelihood and properties of fishermen families" said Tony Oliver. He said that the project would adversely affect the livelihood of around 4,500 Kambavala fishermen. There are around 87 kambavala units in Poonthura that offer a livelihood for thousands of fishermen. "The offshore breakwater would destroy the livelihood of thousands of traditional fishermen who survive on Kambavala fishing. The breakwater offshore would make it impossible for these fishermen to do fishing," said Tony Oliver. However, the Harbour Engineering Department (HED) claimed that the offshore breakwater wouldn't affect traditional fishing. "The offshore breakwater would help increase fish resources and would only benefit them. It could be a problem for trawlers, which is prohibited in shallow waters. The project would be closely watched and studied by NIOT," said an official of the Harbour Engineering Department. The official said that a meeting was held with various organisations attached to the fishermen community. "We had reached a consensus with them before launching the project and they had even visited the offshore breakwater system implemented at Tamil Nadu. They were convinced about the project and wanted us to go ahead with the project," said an official of HED.

Kerala: Kozhikode fishers seek better financial support during trawling ban period

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/kozhikode-fishers-seek-better-financial-support-during-trawling-ban-period/article34719540.ece

"With just a few days left for the annual trawling ban to begin, fishermen's organisations in Kozhikode district are eagerly waiting for a better relief package from the State government amid the pandemic crisis. They are demanding a direct financial assistance scheme either in the form of one-time allowance or short-term credit by reworking the existing relief system that focuses only on the distribution of rice. At a recent district-level review meeting, they had taken up the demand with the district administration and the Fisheries Department authorities, stating that the supply of rice alone would not help underprivileged families which were struggling to cope with the "new normal" after the outbreak of COVID-19. Many were in need of better medical support and financial assistance to facilitate the education of their children, they had said. "Only a nominal amount of ?1,500 from the department's saving-cum-relief scheme reaches the fishermen's families as aid during the lean period.

The sum will not be sufficient to buy even stationery articles for a school-going child," said Abdul Razak, a member of the Matsya Thozhilali Federation. He said the relief package should take into consideration the challenges of the pandemic situation and the steep fall in fishermen's daily income. The majority of those campaigning for the revised compensation package are fishermen who recently faced huge losses following sea erosion along the

Vadakara and Kozhikode coast. With the loss estimate preparation getting delayed in various villages, many of them have lost hope about being able to claim eligible government aid to rebuild their damaged houses. The stance of the Fisheries Department that it will not deal with any complaints related to the damage of fishermen's houses in natural calamities has added to the woes of many local self-governments which are running short of funds to extend interim aid for the struggling groups. Only fishermen whose boats or other fishing equipment were destroyed in natural calamities will be able to claim assistance from the department. "Usually, the relief aid during the 52-day trawling ban period reaches only the members of the government's fishermen's welfare fund board. This discrimination should end and allied workers should also be considered for the aid," said Karichal Preman, vice president of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association. Any aid that was less than ?10,000 for a family would be worthless during the pandemic period, he added.

Kerala: Bring back 24 fishers from Qatar, forums urge CM

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/bring-back-24-fishers-from-qatar-forums-urge-cm/article34722931.ece

"The National Fishworkers' Forum and the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation have appealed to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan to intervene to bring back 24 fishermen jailed in Qatar allegedly for illegal entry into the country's waters. In an appeal sent to the Chief Minister, the fishworkers' forum said that 24 fishers, four from Kerala and the rest from Tamil Nadu, had set out from Iran on a fishing venture in March. However, they were arrested by the authorities in Qatar allegedly for violating the borders. They were jailed after a fine of 50,000 Qatar riyals was imposed on them. They were later released from jail after their sponsor paid the fine. The fishers' union said the State should step in and involve the Indian Embassy in Qatar to repatriate the fishers. The Keralite fishers in the group were identified as Sebastian, 20, from Poovar; Silva Dasan, 33, from Adimalathura; Stephen, 42, from Pallithottam in Kollam; and Lephus, 42, from Moothakkara.

Kerala: Govt imposes 52-day trawling ban

https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/kerala-govt-imposes-52-day-trawling-ban20210602222848/

"The Kerala Cabinet on Wednesday decided to impose a 52-day trawling ban on Kerala's coasts from June 9 to July 31. The period of the ban was extended at the request of fisherfolk to conserve the marine fish resources.""As a measure to conserve marine fish resources, the

Cabinet has decided to impose a trawling ban on Kerala's coasts for 52 days, from midnight of June 9 to July 31. The ban has been raised from the usual 45 days considering the demand raised by traditional fisherfolk,"" said the Kerala Chief Minister's Office.The ban on bottom trawling is intended to enhance marine fish stocks and improve their habitat.

Kerala: CAG flags lapses in fish market construction

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/cag-flags-lapses-in-fish-market-construction/articleshow/83155267.cms

"The city corporation preferred vitrified floor tiles and mirror-finished marble stone to essential items like drainage and water supply in the modern fish market at Palayam rendering it unusable by all means, as per the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on general and social sector which was tabled in the assembly on Tuesday. The report points out lapses on the part of the corporation while constructing a modern fish market at Palayam. According to the audit report, the market was constructed without proper investigation and without co-relating the design with the requirements of the vendors. This resulted in non-utilization of the modern fish market which was constructed spending Rs 23 lakh. Even the basic aspects like seating facility and vending space were compromised and in the end there wasn't sufficient width between the tables and the space was insufficient for seating arrangement.

"While revising the estimate, the corporation had deleted essential items like plumbing works, water supply, etc, and included non-essential items like replacing ceramic with vitrified tiles for floor, changing the surface of fish vending table from kota stone to mirror finished marble stone, etc. This led to a situation where the fish market was completed without provision for drainage, water, etc, which was essential for normal hygienic operation and maintenance of the fish market," the report said. It also flags the lapse on the part of the executive engineer who, according to the audit report, failed to verify the actual work done before effecting the payment and resulted in an overpayment of Rs 4.1 lakh to the contractor. The audit findings were confirmed by the state government and it was found that the estimate was technically defective. The contractor had refunded an amount of Rs 3.6 lakhs in 2018, following the state government's direction to the city corporation. The CAG remarked that local self-government institutions may ensure that utilities being created are designed to meet the requirements of end users and the constructed utilities possess all required facilities.

Kerala: Government to implement 'model fishing village' project

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/govt-to-implement-model-fishing-village-project/articleshow/83072489.cms

"The state government has decided to implement 'model fishing village' project of the

fisheries department for the first time in Chellanam coastal panchayat. The project envisages the construction of houses, provision of drinking water, sanitation, provision for health facilities, setting up of fish marketing centres, construction of fisheries schools, etc. Also, projects worth Rs 18 crore will be implemented in Chellanam on a war footing to prevent sea erosion and flooding. This includes the Rs 16 crore allotted by the previous LDF government under the 100-day projects and also the Rs 2 crore emergency fund allotted two days ago. The ongoing geotube project worth Rs 8 crore will be completed in a time-bound manner. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting held in Ernakulam Guest House on Thursday that was led by industries minister P Rajeev and fisheries minister Saji Cherian to evaluate the loss caused by sea erosion in Chellanam and decide the actions to be taken to protect the coast. The meeting was attended by Hibi Eden, MP, K J Maxi, MLA, district collector S Suhas and several other officials. Model fishing village project aims at the comprehensive development of coastal villages through the coordinated efforts of various departments.

The ministers said that the project will resolve the problems in Chellanam. Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation Ltd (KSCADC) managing director Sheik Pareeth has been entrusted with the responsibility of drafting a study report of the project. A committee led by minister Rajeev will do the overall monitoring of the project implementation and a technical committee headed by Pareeth will monitor the technical aspects of the project. Earlier on Thursday, the two ministers and others, who attended the meeting, have visited Chellanam and interacted with the residents. They also visited the places which were worst affected by the sea erosion last week. Fisheries minister also said that the coastal development projects under the Rs 5,000-crore package announced by the state government will be completed in five years. Tetrapod barrier will be constructed using the Rs 16 crore allotted for seawall construction and the tendering will be completed by June 25. Cleaning and desilting of Vijayan Canal and Upputhodu will be completed soon.

Kerala: Fishers' forum stands with Lakshadweep protests

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fishers-forum-stands-with-lakshadweep-protests/article34687440.ece

"Independent fishers' union Matsya Thozhilai Aikya Vedhi, expressing solidarity with the protesting people of Lakshadweep islands, described the controversial actions of the island's administrator Praful K. Patel as fascist and a forerunner to the implementation of the declared policy of Blue Economy. The fishers' union members organised a dharna before the office of the island administration in Kochi on Monday. P.B. Dayanandan, district secretary, and Charles George, convener, say the actions of Mr. Patel are more than anti-minority steps. These actions give us a foretaste of surrendering the economy to private monopolies. These actions also foreshadow the actions that will be taken by the government to take fishing rights

from the people in the name of Blue Economy. The administrator is also preparing ground for surrendering land assets and rights to exploit natural and deep sea resources to private monopolies favourable to the government, they add. These actions indicate that the country has strayed from its declared policy of non-alignment and they are preparing ground for American domination, the fishers claim.

Kerala: Infrastructure Projects amplified Cyclone Tauktae's impact

https://science.thewire.in/environment/in-kerala-infrastructure-projects-amplified-cyclone-tauktaes-impact/

"An eerie silence is still prevailing over Chellanam, a coastal village panchayat located between Ernakulam and Alappuzha in Kerala, where cyclone Tauktae barrelled dangerously into the tiny houses of COVID-battered fish workers a few days ago. Over 500 houses of the village were inundated in the worst-ever sea attack since Cyclone Ockhi of 2017. The primary health centre at Kandakkadavu in the middle of the panchayat was seen fully submerged in waist-high water due to Tauktae. With the help of fire and rescue workers, health department officials were able to retrieve medicines and equipment stored there, especially those required for COVID-19 treatment. According to panchayat president K.D. Prasad, Chellanam witnessed a spike in COVID-19 cases when the cyclone Tauktae wreaked havoc in all 21 wards. There were 601 active COVID-19 cases in the panchayat area, and even the facilities where the patients got accommodated were destroyed in surging waves. He said high waves continue to hit the coastal settlements despite cyclone moving away. A local resident Louis Abraham said that seawater intrusion into houses is continuing and most houses are under knee-deep water.

"As COVID-related lockdown was strict in our area, rescue and rehabilitation work faced enormous hurdles. We had even to organise online protests to attract relief works and government intervention," said Louis. The situation is almost similar in the Thiruvananthapuram district's fish worker settlements such as Beemapalli, Vizhinjam, Anchuthengu, Muthalapozhi, Paruthiyur, and Kochuthoppu. The road linking Thiruvananthapuram city with the domestic terminal of the local airport via the famous Shanghumukham beach was washed off. Though the cyclone killed only two people in Kerala, its intensity across the coastal region was heavy. The worst affected districts include Ernakulam, Kollam, Alappuzha, Kozhikode and Kasargod. "The nature and severity of cyclone Tauktae indicate that the Arabian Sea will witness more such severe storms in the coming days, especially during late monsoon season, due to climate change. Until 2014 when Cyclone

Nilofar occurred, there were no cyclones in the entire Arabian seacoasts. Global warming, climate variability, and weather changes are increasing the risk.

As far as the Kerala coast is concerned, many human interventions make the cyclones severe. They include land reclamation, port developments, shrimp farming, river diversion, dredging, and sand mining," points out S. Abhilash, a scientist with the Department of Atmospheric Sciences at Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT). "Places like Chellanam have witnessed severe destruction because of the human activities which turned supporting factors for the natural forces. The cyclones have intensified the ongoing coastal erosion," he observed. Abhilash stated that the cyclone frequency over the Bay of Bengal is on the decrease in the recent years, but they are increasing over the Arabian Sea around the onset phase of the monsoon. He noted that cyclone Tauktae is the fourth cyclone in recent years to have developed in the Arabian Sea and in the pre-monsoon period of April to June. All these cyclones since 2018 have been categorised as either 'severe cyclone' or above. After Cyclone Mekanu, which struck Oman in 2018, the Arabian sea witnessed Cyclone Vayu in 2019, and it struck Gujarat. Cyclone Nisarga followed it in 2020 and struck Maharashtra. "All tropical cyclones require large amounts of energy to remain alive. Normally, this energy is obtained from the warm water and humid air over the tropical seas. At present, seawater up to depths of 50 metres is hot in the Arabian Sea, and so the possibilities of more cyclones are in the cards," he observed.

While Thushar Nirmal Saradhi, a social activist who works with the climate change victims of Chellanam, emphasised that "for people outside Chellanam, sea erosion may be a new phenomenon propelled by the climate change-induced cyclones but for us, it has been happening for over six decades." "It all began when a shipping route was dredged to Cochin shipyard through the sea close to our villages. The construction of the coastal highway connecting Kochi with Aapuzha has further intensified sea erosion. Now, the cyclones have turned into a regular phenomenon posing a severe threat to our people. In the previous years, the authorities have promised to construct sea walls using geosynthetic tubes. Still, synthetic geo constructions that began last year were washed away in the cyclone," said Saradhi. Impact of infrastructure projects the unscientific and rapid development of big infrastructural projects is being pointed out as one of the reasons for the intense impact of the cyclone. Max Martin, a researcher working with coastal communities in Southern Kerala, said: "The impact of the cyclone (Tauktae) was heavy on the northern parts of all major constructions in the sea in Kerala, mainly ports and breakwaters. Rampant coastal zone violations and destruction of adjoining wetlands have contributed immensely to the destruction. The coastal region of Kerala is now under high risk, and it is high time that ways are found to minimise the impacts of climate change."

A similar concern is being highlighted by those working with fishermen. "Every year, the sea is

drawing closer to us. The wide beaches are getting smaller. Cyclone Tauktae is not an isolated phenomenon. It is an extension of the disasters happening in the coastal region for a long time. The human factors related to sea erosion are often ignored conveniently," said Joseph Jude, a rights activist working with Kerala fish workers. Albert Thomas, a fish worker of Arthunkal in Alappuzha observed that climate change has been affecting the character of the Arabian sea for a long time. "The sea started turning turbulent ever since the Tsunami of 2004. Ockhi further worsened the situation. Now we rarely see the sea calm. The height and force of the waves have increased in recent years. They are times, not just during the monsoon months of June to September but all through the year. It's difficult to predict how the sea will behave," said Thomas. Fish workers also alleged that there is an alarming depletion in fish wealth in the Arabian Sea in the last three years. They state that because of the loss of beaches, they find it difficult to dry their nets and small fish under the sun. In Vizhinjam-Shanghumukham regions, fish workers accuse the Vizhinjam International Seaport, which is under construction, of inciting natural disasters. A news report said that Cyclone Tauktae severely damaged the breakwater of the under-construction seaport, and washed away vast amounts of stones and concrete pillars.

"The seaport has played a significant role in destroying houses in Valiyathura, Beemapalli, and Shanghumukham areas. Because of the constructions in the sea, the waves have become rougher. The breakwater has prompted the waves to hit the shores harder," observes Joseph Vijayan, an expert on coastal communities in Thiruvananthapuram. Do seawalls work? In 2017, the international journal Natural Hazards published a paper 'Impact of sea-level rise and coastal slope on shoreline change along the Indian coast,' which said that the highest level of coastal erosion was occurring in West Bengal and identified Kerala as a close second. Other studies have also observed that the western coast of India was primarily stable except for Kerala's coastline of 590 km. They estimate that about 63 percent of the state's coastal region faces sea erosion. Earlier this month, the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) distributed a draft coastal zone management plan among concerned local bodies in all coastal districts for discussion. In Kerala, nine districts are affected by sea erosion. During each incident of sea turbulence, coastal communities seek solutions, and the government soon starts the construction of seawalls.

As per data available from the KCZMA, seawalls have been erected in almost 60% of the Kerala coast, spread in 310 km. "Seawalls are not a solution to sea erosion. Fortifications of this kind are increasing the flow of the currents around the shore. That results in the intensification of waves to the north of the breakwater and subsequent further erosion of that shoreline. But the local people insist that fortifications are the only way they can save their homes," observed Abhilash of the CUSAT. Joyce Mary, a 52-year-old resident of Kannamaly, said seawalls were a big failure in preventing the raging sea from entering households. Even huge stones and concrete pillars used for the walls have been washed away. Losing home,

Joyce moved to a relative's house where 15 people of three families now live. According to Joseph Vijayan, seawalls and breakwaters are interruptions of sediments across the coast preventing the coastal areas from getting replenished. While Max Martin said: "We need to plant trees and plants in the coastal areas that protect our beaches. Only natural remedies can solve the issue, not human-made constructions. Coastal vegetation, as well as mangrove plantations, can hold the sand in the shore." Activists want the state government to formulate a policy in this regard. "A state like Kerala with its long shoreline needed to have a clear policy outlook to protect coastal areas," said Charles George, a leader of the Kerala fish workers forum.

Kerala: State to enforce 52-day trawling ban

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/state-to-enforce-52-day-trawling-ban/article34651813.ece

"The State government has decided to impose a 52-day ban on trawling operations, beginning midnight of June 9 and ending on July 31 midnight. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Fisheries Minister Saji Cheriyan with the stakeholders in the sector on Wednesday. The State government had, for the first time extended the ban from 45 days, in force since 1994, to 52 days last year in view of the demand raised by traditional fishers. The Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (SMTF) and Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi had favoured longer periods of ban on trawling operations during the monsoon as a measure to conserve marine fish resources. Jackson Pollayil said after the meeting that the SMTF was in favour of a longer period of ban on monsoon operations though the Minister felt that the continuing lockdown and restrictions on fishing activities due to the pandemic spread as well as loss of fishing days had to be considered when the trawling ban was imposed. The Minister is learnt to have said that a longer period of trawling ban may be considered in the future as a step to conserving resources.

Boat operators' demand The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators have, however, said that the 52-day ban would come into effect in addition to the days that had been lost due to the pandemic spread. In a recent letter to the Chief Minister, Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal of the Boat Owners' Association said that around 3,000 mechanised boats operated off the coast of Kerala and that another 800 boats from neighbouring States were engaged in fishing in Kerala waters. However, the restrictions being brought on fishing activities related only to the boats setting out from the Kerala coast whereas fishing boats from other States were engaged in fishing freely. The weather warnings and other restrictions were enforced only on the Kerala boats whereas boats from other states operated freely. The boat operators also said that the cost of fuel had gone up substantially making fishing expeditions economically unviable and appealed to the State government to take appropriate steps to provide solace to the fishing

sector, which employed about 10 lakh people directly and indirectly. All boats from other States have been ordered to leave Kerala shore before June 9. All diesel pumps will be closed along the shore while the pumps operated by Matsyafed will supply the fuel to traditional boats.

Kerala: How infrastructure projects intensified cyclone Tauktae's impacts

https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/environment/how-infrastructure-projects-intensified-cyclone-tauktaes-impacts-in-kerala-6933501.html

"An eerie silence is still prevailing over Chellanam, a coastal village panchayat located between Ernakulam and Alappuzha in Kerala, where cyclone Tauktae barrelled dangerously into the tiny houses of covid- battered fish workers a few days ago. Over 500 houses of the village were inundated in the worst-ever sea attack since Cyclone Ockhi of 2017. The primary health centre at Kandakkadavu in the middle of the panchayat was seen fully submerged in waist-high water due to Tauktae. With the help of fire and rescue workers, health department officials were able to retrieve medicines and equipment stored there, especially those required for Covid-19 treatment. According to panchayat president K.D. Prasad, Chellanam witnessed a spike in Covid-19 cases when the cyclone Tauktae wreaked havoc in all 21 wards. There were 601 active Covid cases in the panchayat area, and even the facilities where the patients got accommodated were destroyed in surging waves. He said high waves continue to hit the coastal settlements despite cyclone moving away. A local resident Louis Abraham said that seawater intrusion into houses is continuing and most houses are under knee-deep water.

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It is an extension of the disasters happening in the coastal region for a long time. The human factors related to sea erosion are often ignored conveniently," said Joseph Jude, a rights activist working with Kerala fish workers. Albert Thomas, a fish worker of Arthunkal in Alappuzha observed that climate change has been affecting the character of the Arabian sea for a long time. "The sea started turning turbulent ever since the Tsunami of 2004. Ockhi further worsened the situation. Now we rarely see the sea calm. The height and force of the waves

have increased in recent years. They are times, not just during the monsoon months of June to September but all through the year. It's difficult to predict how the sea will behave," said Thomas. Fish workers also alleged that there is an alarming depletion in fish wealth in the Arabian Sea in the last three years. They state that because of the loss of beaches, they find it difficult to dry their nets and small fish under the sun. In Vizhinjam-Shanghumukham regions, fish workers accuse the Vizhinjam International Seaport, which is under construction, of inciting natural disasters. A news report said that Cyclone Tauktae severely damaged the breakwater of the under-construction seaport severely, and vast amounts of stones and concrete pillars were washed away.

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mangrove plantations, can hold the sand in the shore." Activists want the state government to formulate a policy in this regard. "A state like Kerala with its long shoreline needed to have a clear policy outlook to protect coastal areas," said Charles George, a leader of the Kerala fish workers forum.

Kerala: Govt allots Rs.2cr for Chellanam

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/govt-allots-rs-2cr-for-chellanam/articleshow/82920370.cms

"The state government decided to allot Rs 2 crore for implementing emergency coastal protection measures in the Chellanam coast before monsoon. Also, the ongoing projects along the coast will be completed in a time-bound manner. The decision was taken in the high-level meeting held in Thiruvananthapuram to discuss the difficulties faced by the residents of Chellanam. Vijayan Canal and Uppu Thodu will be desilted within a week to ensure free flow of water in case of sea flooding. Project worth Rs 45 lakh to repair seawalls and geobags will be completed by the first week of June. The Irrigation Design & Research Board (IDRB) has been entrusted with the responsibility to complete the tendering of the projects worth Rs16 crore that was earlier announced by the government.

The meeting was attended by industries minister P Rajeev, fisheries minister Saji Cherian, irrigation minister Roshy Augustine, transport minister Antony Raju and MLAs K J Maxi (Kochi) and P P Chitharanjan (Alappuzha). Additional chief secretary T K Jose, Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation Ltd (KSCADC) MD Sheik Pareeth along with senior officials of various departments attended the meeting. The meeting decided that a comprehensive solution will be implemented in Chellanam to stop sea erosion and to ensure basic infrastructure development in the coast. KSCADC has also been directed to submit a detailed project report on Model Village Project within one month. The minister will convene a meeting in Ernakulam on Thursday with the participation of elected representatives from various places.

Kerala: Fish market timings cut in Palakkad

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fish-market-timings-cut-in-palakkad/articleshow/82866177.cms

"The disaster management authority has cut the functioning time of 'meen market' at Valiyangadi, the biggest in the district, up to 2pm and introduced one-way traffic to control the heavy rush of people thronging the market from Saturday. A meeting of the authority presided over by its chairman and district collector Mrunmai Joshi here on Friday had directed the municipal secretary and other concerned officials to take stringent measures to control the crowd at the fish market and directed to allow its functioning only up to 2pm every day. The

collector also directed the police to introduce a one-way traffic system to the fish market. Shops were asked to cut down the staff strength by 50%. An awareness campaign through mike announcements was also launched for the market workers and the customers. 3,020 new Covid cases The district reported 3,020 Covid-19 positive cases and 3,360 persons recovered from the infection, taking the total number of persons under treatment to 23,311 on Saturday. Of those tested positive, 1,789 contracted the disease through local transmission. Source of infection of 1,202 persons is unknown. Seven persons who had come from abroad and other states and 22 health workers also tested positive, health department officials said.

Karnataka: Three rescued fishermen handed over to Kerala

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/three-rescued-fishermen-handed-over-to-kerala/article34601533.ece

"Coast Guard Karnataka on Wednesday handed over to the Kerala government the three fishermen who were rescued in the sea off 10 nautical miles from Kannur at midnight on May 14. According to a press release, the three fishermen were handed over to the Kerala government authorities in the presence of Dakshina Kannada MP and State BJP president Nalin Kumar Kateel in Mangaluru. The release said that the three fishermen, Arun (36), S. Francis (58) and Suriendar (64), were in the fishing boat IFB Bhadriya. The boat suffered an engine failure because of inclement weather on that night. Coast Guard ship Vikram braved the rough sea and rescued the three fishermen. The ship then proceed towards the Lakshadweep Islands coast for search and rescue operation of fishing boat IBD/TN/06/MM/5517 from Tamil Nadu and fishing boat IFB Aji Mersha from Kerala. The ship carried out extensive operation along with Dornier aircraft but could not trace the two boats and their crew members, the release said.

Kerala: MPEDA patents its mud crab hatchery technology

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/mpeda-patents-its-mud-crab-hatchery-technology/articleshow/82665896.cms

"Mpeda-RGCA has patented its mud crab hatchery technology with the controller general of patent, design and trade marks, Govt. of India, for 20 years from 2011 to 2030. The hatchery technology for mud crab (scientific name-Scylla serrata) has been developed by the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture (RGCA), the research and development arm of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (Mpeda). Mpeda chairman K S Srinivas said, “It will go a long way in meeting the seed requirement of farmers who intend to undertake diversified species for aquaculture instead of concentrating on shrimp farming alone.” Keeping in view the huge demand for mud crab, especially in South East Asian countries, Mpeda had initiated a pilot project for mud crab seed (known as crab-instar) production during 2004 and subsequently made the commercial hatchery for the first time in India during 2013 with the capacity of one

million per annum. Due to its growing demand, the seed production capacity of RGCA's mud crab hatchery has been increased to 1.4 million per annum. Dr Emilia T Quinitio, an eminent scientist from Aquaculture Division of International Institute known as Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Centre (SEAFDEC), Philippines, had extended the consultancy service till 2013 to RGCA.

Since then, the technology has been standardized by the RGCA's scientists within a short period. The Mpeda chairman said that the major achievement lies in increasing the survival rate of crab instar from 3% world record to seven 7%. Further, the hatchery unit is designed in such a manner that all sections are under one roof with complete bio-security measures. So far, 7.28 million seeds have been produced and supplied to 659 farmers across the country.

Kerala: Floodplain fishing continues unabated

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/floodplain-fishing-continues-unabated-in-kerala/article34587592.ece

"Floodplain fishing (Oothapidutam in local parlance) continues unabated in the State despite the Kerala Fisheries Department banning the practice after it was found that it could lead to the extinction of several endemic species. Enthusiastic fishers were seen catching fish that migrated from large fresh waterbodies to inland waterbodies and wetlands for breeding and laying of eggs during the past few days when the State received heavy showers. Usually, the migration of fish begins with the onset of monsoon. The flooding of inland waterbodies following the heavy downpour provides a suitable habitat for the migratory movement, pairing, and deposition of eggs, pointed out fisheries experts. The Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, 2013 and 2015 (Amendments) had banned the fishing of brood fishes. The violation of the provisions of the act can attract a fine up to Rs.10,000 and imprisonment up to three months. The major endemic species caught during the critical phase of their life cycle are Vala (Wallago attu), Manjakkoori or yellow cat fish (Horabagrus brachysoma), Kuruva (Systomus sarana), Kaari or Stinging catfish (Heterpneuests fossils), Climbing perch (Anabas tesudineus) striped channa or braal (Channa striata) and Murrel or Cheran (Channa pseudomarulius).

These species fetch good price in the local market, prompting fishers to go in for the varieties. The fishing of brood fish is a serious threat to the survival of many inland fishes including the endemics like the Labeo dussumieri, experts said. Fisheries experts suggested notifying the ban order in concurrence with the monsoon onset predictions issued by the Indian Meteorological Department. The ban shall come into force at least a fortnight before the onset of the monsoon, they suggested. Responding to the developments, Tinku Biswal, Secretary, Fisheries, said steps would be taken for the strict implementation of the provisions of the Act and end such practices. The ban on it usually comes into operation from June. Directions will be issued for

curbing the illegal practice without delay, said Ms. Biswal.

Kerala: 15 fishermen from Kozhikode missing

https://www.orissapost.com/cyclone-tauktae-15-fishermen-from-kozhikode-missing/

"At least 15 fishermen who ventured into the sea on May 5 from Beypore port in Kozhikode are missing. All of them are natives of Tamil Nadu. The boat "Ajmeer Sha" which sailed from the shores of Beypore on May 5 is missing and there is no information about any of the fishermen who were in the boat. Meanwhile another boat which went to the sea at the same time from Beypore has reached the Goan coast following some mechanical failure in its engine. This boat "Milad-3" also has 15 men from Tamil Nadu and all of them are at 7 nautical miles from Goa. The fishermen organisations have appealed to the Coast Guard and Navy to immediately start rescue operations. Keelari Preman, state general secretary of fishing boat owners association while speaking to IANS said, "We have appealed to the Coast Guard, Indian Navy and state government to trace and bring back the missing fishermen. There is no information about the fishermen or of the boat, "Ajmeer Shah" which went fishing from Beypore port." Cyclone Tuaktae, according to IMD officials, has moved from the Kerala coast and is likely to touch base in Gujarat.

While there is a sigh of relief among the officials and people of the state, unabated rains are continuing with thunder and lightning in the state. Two people are reported dead from the state owing to heavy rains but officials have not yet confirmed the names and other details of the deceased. With Covid-19 at its peak and heavy rains lashing the state, officials are facing difficulties in rehabilitating people in rain affected areas with the local police, people's representatives and other officials are trying their best. The heavy floods of 2018 is still lingering in the memory of people of Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts. The heavy rains and floods have taken the lives of 483 people and several were injured. Many lost their homes and belongings and people are worried about whether a repeat of the flood will take place in the state. The Thrissur district collector has already ordered the opening of spillway shutters of Peringalkuthu dam. The people staying on the banks of Chalakudy River are being given warnings on the opening of shutters. More than 150 people are being rehabilitated in various camps in Ernakulam district and the officials are taking care that the people who are in camps stay according to Covid protocols.

Kerala: Cyclone Tauktae: 23 fishermen who set out feared lost at sea

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/cyclone-tauktae-23-fishermen-who-set-out-kerala-feared-lost-sea-148940

"Twenty-three fishermen who set out from the Kerala coast in two separate fishing boats are feared missing, said officials of Fisheries Department. The Kerala State Disaster

Management Authority (KSDMA) and the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) had warned the fishermen at sea to return to the shore as Cyclone Tauktae was intensifying. However, the officials stated that there has been no communication from the two boats. Of the two, 15 fishermen are part of a fishing boat named 'Ajmir Shah', which set out from Kozhikode's Beypore coast, while eight fishermen are part of a boat named 'Andavar Thunai', which set out from Kochi. The fishing boat, Andavar Thunai, is owned by Nagapattinam native Manivel and the fishermen onboard are all reportedly Tamil Nadu natives. According to Fisheries department officials, both boats had ventured into the sea earlier this month, before the cyclone alert was issued. "These are gill net boats, which set out to sea to fish continuously for up to three weeks. Some of the similar boats, which had gone from Kerala, have even harboured in the Gujarat and Thengapattanam coast of Tamil Nadu after the warning was issued. So we can understand how far the boats had been," said Aneesh P, Assistant Director of Fisheries in Ernakulam district.

Meanwhile, there are unconfirmed reports that some fishermen have landed in Lakshadweep Islands. However, there is no confirmation if these are the fishermen of the 'Andavar Thunai' boat, said the official. According to Fisheries Department officials in Beypore, the missing fishing boat Ajmir Shah had set out near Mangalore coast. "The owner of the boat said they had set out near Mangalore coast. We have given information to the Coast Guard and they are searching," said the official. Meanwhile, on the night of May 14, the Indian Coast Guard on Saturday recused three fishermen who had set off to sea from Kerala's Kannur. Coast Guard ship Vikram rescued the fishing boat named 'Badhriya', which had left the Talessary Harbour on May 9. The fishermen were provided medical emergency treatment onboard the ICG ship. The ICG headquarters in Kerala and Mahe coordinated the search and rescue operation in the state. District Commander DIG Sanatan Jena said that despite the extremely rough sea conditions, ICG ships were out at sea rescuing the fishermen trapped in rough sea and wind conditions.

Kerala and Lakshadweep Islands: Cyclone Tauktae: High-wave alert

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/cyclone-tauktae-high-wave-alert-in-kerala-lakshadweep/articleshow/82697031.cms

"A warning of high waves and turbulent sea has been issued for Kerala and Lakshadweep till Monday midnight due to cyclonic storm Tauktae. On Sunday, many places in Kerala received heavy rainfall though the cyclone moved well past its coast. The India meteorological department (IMD) said Tauktae, which has taken the form of a ""very severe cyclonic storm"", is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast on Monday evening. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) warned that

there would be significant wave height and corresponding swell height in the coastal region up to 10km off Kerala. There is a possibility of low-lying areas of Kollam, Alappuzha, Kochi, Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod experiencing a surge because of waves and tidal conditions. It has forecast high waves in the range of 3.2-5.1 metres along the Kerala coast from Pozhiyoor to Kasaragod. Surface current speeds may vary between 32 and 68 cm/ sec. Squally weather with wind speed reaching 40-50kmph, gusting up to 60kmph, is very likely along and off Kerala. Isolated heavy rains likely today Thunderstorms with lightning accompanied by gusty wind speed reaching 30-40kmph are very likely in one or two places in Kerala and Lakshadweep till May 20, it said. Isolated heavy rainfall have been forecast in all districts of the state, except Thiruvananthapuram, Palakkad and Wayanad, on Monday.

On Sunday, an orange alert of very heavy rainfall of 12-20 cm was issued for eight districts -- Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod. Hundreds of houses were damaged in coastal areas across the state as seawater seeped in following high waves. Families living in coastal areas and low-lying areas of the state have been shifted to relief camps. The Indian Navy on Sunday undertook rescue and rehabilitation of people in Chellanam, which was heavily hit by tidal waves. High tidal waves also lashed Kaipamangalam, Chavakkad and Kodungallur in Thrissur, Pallithura in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrikkannapuzha in Alappuzha and Beypore and Koyilandy in Kozhikode.

Kerala: Nine Missing after fishing boat drowns near Lakshadweep

https://www.news18.com/news/india/cyclone-tauktae-nine-people-missing-after-boat-drowns-near-lakshadweep-search-operation-begins-3741782.html

"Nine people on Saturday went missing after a fishing boat named Aandavar Thunai from Kerala's Kochi coast capsized near Lakshadweep due to strong windstorm in view of cyclone Tauktae. Of these, seven were from Tamil Nadu's Nagapattanam and remaining from West Bengal. Two other boats that sailed with Aandavar Thunai managed to reach Lakshadweep safely, but this ill-fated boat got caught in severe windstorm, 100 nautical miles from Lakshadweep. The boat was owned by a Tamil Nadu native Manivel. The Indian Coast Guard has been pressed into rescue work. As per reports, more than 850 boats from Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have been on the sea.

A standing instruction is in place to shelter any boat that comes to the coast and those in boats will have to undergo Covid-19 tests. The central government had advised total suspension of fishing operations in seas in view of the cyclonic storm. Torrential rains accompanied by fierce winds and high tidal waves wreaked havoc and claimed two lives in Kerala, as it lashed the state since last night forcing the government to shift hundreds of families to relief camps, PTI sources said on Saturday. The southernmost district, Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod in the northern tip, witnessed widespread uprooting of trees, water-logging and disruption of power

supply since last night. The Central Water Commission (CWC) issued flood warning to the state in the wake of rising water level in rivers like Manimala and Achankovil. As the India Meteorological Department (IMD) sounded 'red alert', indicating the possibility of extremely heavy rainfall above 204 mm in 24 hours, in 9 districts, the entire state was put on high vigil. The 'red alert', in view of the severe deep depression over Arabian sea, was issued in Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod district, according to the IMD. The Coast Guard Ship Vikram on Friday night rescued three fishermen from a small fishing boat off northern Kannur district.

Cyclone Tauktae: 23 fishermen who set out from Kerala, India, feared lost at sea

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/cyclone-tauktae-23-fishermen-who-set-out-kerala-feared-lost-sea-148940

"Twenty-three fishermen who set out from the coast of the south Indian state of Kerala in two separate fishing boats are feared missing, said officials of Fisheries Department. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) and the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) had warned the fishermen at sea to return to the shore as Cyclone Tauktae was intensifying. However, the officials stated that there has been no communication from the two boats. Of the two, 15 fishermen are part of a fishing boat named 'Ajmir Shah', which set out from Kozhikode's Beypore coast, while eight fishermen are part of a boat named 'Andavar Thunai', which set out from Kochi. The fishing boat, Andavar Thunai, is owned by Nagapattinam native Manivel and the fishermen onboard are all reportedly Tamil Nadu natives. According to Fisheries department officials, both boats had ventured into the sea earlier this month, before the cyclone alert was issued. "These are gill net boats, which set out to sea to fish continuously for up to three weeks. Some of the similar boats, which had gone from Kerala, have even harboured in the Gujarat and Thengapattanam coast of Tamil Nadu after the warning was issued. So we can understand how far the boats had been," said Aneesh P, Assistant Director of Fisheries in Ernakulam district.

Meanwhile, there are unconfirmed reports that some fishermen have landed in Lakshadweep Islands. However, there is no confirmation if these are the fishermen of the 'Andavar Thunai' boat, said the official. According to Fisheries Department officials in Beypore, the missing fishing boat Ajmir Shah had set out near Mangalore coast. "The owner of the boat said they had set out near Mangalore coast. We have given information to the Coast Guard and they are searching," said the official. Meanwhile, on the night of May 14, the Indian Coast Guard on Saturday recused three fishermen who had set off to sea from Kerala's Kannur. Coast Guard ship Vikram rescued the fishing boat named 'Badhriya', which had left the Talessary Harbour on May 9. The fishermen were provided medical emergency treatment onboard the ICG ship. The ICG headquarters in Kerala and Mahe coordinated the search and rescue operation in the

state. District Commander DIG Sanatan Jena said that despite the extremely rough sea conditions, ICG ships were out at sea rescuing the fishermen trapped in rough sea and wind conditions.

Kerala, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Goa and Maharashtra: Cyclone Tauktae: Coast Guard warns fishermen as cyclone likely to hit Western Coast

https://www.india.com/news/india/cyclone-tauktae-coast-guard-warns-fishermen-as-cyclone-likely-to-hit-western-coast-4660263/

"With the formation of Cyclone Tauktae over the Arabian Sea, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) issued an advisory to the Fisheries Department to warn the fishermen not to venture into sea and ask them to return to the nearest harbour, officials said. Also Read - Year's First Cyclone 'Tauktae' Forming Over Arabian Sea, Likely To Intensify Further, Says IMD. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a low-pressure area is forming over the Arabian Sea and it may gradually turn into a cyclone over the east-central Arabian Sea by May 16. The cyclone 'Tauktae' is likely to impact areas including the coast of Kerala, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Goa and Maharashtra. Meanwhile, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has ordered the suspension of fishing activity on the coasts.IMD issued a warning for a low-pressure area over the Arabian Sea that is likely to turn into a cyclonic storm. Although Kerala will not be in its path. Heavy rainfall is likely to occur on May 14 and 15. Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) held preparedness meetings with Army, Navy, IAF, Coast Guard and NDRF. Fishing activity has been suspended, said the chief minister. If the cyclone hits the Western coast, then it will be the first cyclonic storm in the country in 2021.

Kerala, Lakshadweep Islands and Gujarat : Red alert braces for high intensity cyclone

https://indianexpress.com/article/weather/cyclone-takutae-2021-live-updates-gujarat-kerala-lakshadweep-7314509/

"A cyclonic disturbance will be formed over Lakshadweep and Arabian Sea in the next 36 hours, bringing heavy rains to the southern parts of the country, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. Due to this, a "high intensity" cyclone will reach the Gujarat coast by May 18. After the cyclonic warning the National Disaster Response Force has deployed several teams on ground. At least 24 teams are pre-deployed and 29 teams are on standby for Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, NDRF DG, SN Pradhan told ANI. In a warning, IMD predicted intense showers in Gujarat starting May 17, with its intensity escalating in the subsequent days. The state will have extremely heavy rainfall at a few places like Saurashtra and Kutch on May 18 and 19.

Due to the presence of the cyclone, Gujarat rains would be accompanied with gusty winds going ranging from 50 kmph to 80 kmph in the next 5-6 days. Owing to the cyclonic disturbance, heavy to very heavy rainfall is also expected over Lakshadweep in the next 24 hours. Kerala and Tamil Nadu will experience extremely heavy rainfalls till 16 May, IMD said in its latest bulletin. A red alert has been declared in three districts of Kerala and Lakshadweep on Friday, and five districts of Kerala on Saturday. Meanwhile, a different cyclonic disturbance lies over parts of North India, including Uttar Pradesh. Hailstorm and heavy rainfall can be expected here. Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh will see heavy rainfall in the next 24 hours too.

Kerala: Cyclone Tauktae: Kerala issues red alert for eight districts

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/kerala-red-alert-in-eight-districts-after-cyclonic-storm-prediction-by-imd-11620969787344.html

"The Kerala government has issued red alert for eight districts following cyclonic storm prediction by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The storm is expected to hit Kerala in the next 24 hours. The districts for which red alert has been issued are Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Malappuram, Kozhikkode, Wayanad, Kannur, and Kasargod. NDRF DG SN Pradhan has informed that 24 teams have been pre-deployed and 29 teams are on standby for Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra. In a weather update issued this morning, the IMD said that the low-pressure area over Lakshadweep and adjoining southeast Arabian sea still persisted. ""Associated cyclonic circulation extending up to mid tropospheric levels, It is very likely to concentrate into a Depression over the same region during next 12 hours and intensify further into a Cyclonic Storm during subsequent 24 hours,"" IMD said. It further said that it was very likely to intensify further and move north northwestwards towards Gujarat and adjoining Pakistan coasts. It is likely to reach near Gujarat coast around May 18. For Kerala, the department has predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places with extremely heavy falls at isolated places on May 14-15 and heavy to very heavy falls at isolated places on May 16 and 17.

IMD Warning for Fishermen The IMD has advised fishermen out in the Deep Sea to return to coast. The fishermen are advised not to venture into southeast Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep – Maldives areas from May 13, east central Arabian Sea along and off Karnataka coast from May 14, into east central Arabian Sea and along and off Maharashtra – Goa coasts from May 15 and into east central and adjoining northeast Arabian Sea along and off Gujarat coast from May 17. Sea condition from May 14 to 18 According to IMD, sea conditions over southeast Arabian sea and adjoining Lakshadweep — Maldives area and equatorial Indian Ocean will be rough to very rough on May 14. Sea condition over east central Arabian sea will be very rough to high on May 15 and high to very high on May 16 and over northeast Arabian sea from May 18.

""Sea conditions will be rough to very rough over Comorin area and along and off Kerala coast on 14th and 15th, very rough to High over east central Arabian Sea along and off Karnataka coast on 15th May and Maharashtra – Goa coasts on 15th & 16th May. It is very likely to be very rough to High over northeast Arabian Sea along & off south Gujarat coast from 17th May morning,"" the IMD said in its update on Thursday.

Kerala: Fishers' forum asks community members to exercise caution

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/fishers-forum-asks-community-members-to-exercise-caution/article34538844.ece

"The Kerala Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali Samithy, representing fishers in the traditional sector, has called on the fishing community to impose upon itself more restrictions and follow physical-distancing norms to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as Ernakulam is seeing massive surge in the pandemic cases. Secretary of the Samithy P.V. Jayan said that even the opening of harbours, even partially, as it is happening now, would help the chances of COVID-19 spread. He said that fishing boats of different sizes manned by two to 45 people are now venturing out, even on a limited level. When they come back to the shore, there is difficulty in following the COVID-19 protocol. At the same time, there is a crisis-like situation in the inland fisheries sector brought about both by the spread of COVID-19 and the deteriorating condition of the backwaters around Kochi. P.N. Babu, convener of the Vembanad Kayal Samrakshana Samithy, said that the backwaters were shrinking. There is a sharp drop in catch, which has accentuated the crisis facing inland fishers in the wake of the spread of the pandemic. He said that there was demand for inland fish from consumers despite the lockdown.

But the fish catch had dwindled and the price of fish was going up. Package sought Meanwhile, Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi claimed that oil sardine landings on the Kerala coast had shrunk to about 35,000 tonnes (provisional figures) during the last financial year. This is down by more than 10,000 tonnes compared to the previous financial year. "There is a crisis-like situation. The fish drought is serious," he said as he called on the government to declare a package for the coastal community even as rations and special provision supplies were helping them. The dwindling catch has resulted in the price of all varieties of fish going up sharply. While there is little oil sardine available, what has been passed for the favourite fish in Kerala is the lesser sardine (Karichaala), which is now selling for about Rs. 280 a kg. Shrimp price is up at about Rs. 550 a kg and premium quality seer (king) fish is being sold for over Rs. 1,000 a kg. Mr. Jayan also said that Kochi harbours were being hosting mostly boats coming from outside the district. It is the common practice for fishers come by road to different harbours and then venture out into the sea. However, the practice of crowded buses and transport vehicles increase the risk of COVID-19 spread, he added.

Kerala: Kufos looks to leverage biofloc method for Vannamei farming

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kufos-looks-to-leverage-biofloc-method-for-vannamei-farming/article34542990.ece

"The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (Kufos) is looking to deploy the biofloc method to farm Vannamei shrimp even as COVID-19 restrictions and job losses are turning more and more people to self-employment in agriculture and allied activities. Vice Chancellor K. Riji John said the biofloc technology had now been standardised so that those with limited land area could take up fish culture using the technology. It has found acceptance among aquaculturists with the Department of Fisheries offering support for the programme. The fish that is now being widely cultivated using the technology is the genetically-modified farmed tilapia (GIFT). Such ventures can be turned into economically-remunerative ones for farmers by switching the candidate species to Vannamei shrimp, he said. The biofloc model is an intensive aquaculture system and is considered to hold an advantage over conventional systems, as the normally harmful waste produced in conventional aquaculture can be turned into feed for fish. Experimental Vannamei farming had begun in the State around six years ago under an initiative by Kufos.

The exotic whiteleg shrimps are native to the Eastern Pacific Ocean and have been found to be suited to the brackish water conditions in Kerala. Extensive culture of Vannamei has been undertaken in Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, and Tamil Nadu, among other coastal States. The ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture in Chennai had even launched a mobile application, Vanami shrimp app, for disseminating information on shrimp farming. The export of Vannamei accounts for a substantial chunk of earnings from seafood exports from India with the USA and South East Asian and European Union countries accounting for most business.

Kerala: Matsyafed mulls home delivery of fish due to Covid situation

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/matsyafed-mulls-home-delivery-of-fish-due-to-covid-situation-1.5659983

"The Matsyafed (Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Limited) is planning to implement home delivery of fish considering the Covid situation. The customers can place order by sending a message via WhatsApp to the Matsyafed. Fish will be delivered within 10 kilometres limit of each Matsyafed unit. The home delivery system was planned as the number of customers coming to Matsyafed shops declined during lockdown. Matsyafed has already implemented selling fish in vehicles with freezer at major places. The vehicle reaches each place on scheduled days. Raw fish, cleaned fish and value-added products from fish are sold this way. The variety of fish chosen by the customer will be delivered in their

households as per the home delivery system. Fish will be delivered in two wheeler. Rs 20 is collected as delivery charge within 5 kilometres limit and Rs 20 within 10 kilometres limit. Fish from the farms under fisheries department also will be delivered in this system.

Kerala: Fisherman struck by lightning; dies at sea

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fisherman-struck-by-lightning-dies-at-sea/article34541219.ece

"A young fisherman from the district died on Tuesday night after he was struck by lightning out at sea. The youngster was identified as Satheesh, 17, of Pazhayanada, Anchuthengu. Heavy thunderstorms had lashed Thiruvananthapuram district throughout Tuesday evening and night, and the sea was also rough. The incident occurred around 9 p.m. around five kilometres off the Anchuthengu coast, according to the Coastal Police, Anchuthengu. Satheesh and four others had gone out for fishing in a small boat. The young fisherman was reportedly standing upright in the vessel when the lightning struck. None of the others was injured. The body has been transferred to the Taluk Hospital in Chirayinkeezhu. The coastal police have registered a case for unnatural death. Fishing has been prohibited along the Kerala coast from May 13, Thursday, following a cyclone alert in the Arabian Sea issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The State Emergency Operations Centre has advised fishermen out at sea to make for the nearest coast by Wednesday night. According to the IMD, a low pressure area likely to form by Friday is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm in the subsequent 48 hours.

Kerala: Fishers appeal for more caution as lockdown brings misery on fishing sector

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fishers-appeal-for-more-caution-as-lockdown-brings-misery-on-fishing-sector/article34535046.ece

"The Kerala Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali Samithy, representing fishers in the traditional sector, has called on the fishing community to impose upon itself more restrictions and to follow social-distancing norms to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as Ernakulam is seeing massive surge in the pandemic cases. Secretary of the Samithy P. V. Jayan suggested that even the opening of the harbours, even partially, as it is happening now, would help the chances of the COVID-19 spread. He said that fishing boats, of different sizes, manned by two to 45 people are now venturing out, even on a limited level. When they come back to the shore, there is difficulty in following the COVID-19 protocol. At the same time, there is a crisis-like situation in the inland fisheries sector brought about both by the spread of COVID-19 and the deteriorating condition of the backwaters around Kochi. P. N. Babu, convenor of the Vembanad Kayal Samrakshana Samithy, forum for protection of the Vembanad backwaters, said that the backwaters were shrinking.

There is a sharp drop in catch, which has accentuated the crisis facing inland fishers in the wake of the spread of the pandemic. He said that there was demand for inland fish from consumers despite the COVID-19 lockdown. But the fish catch had dwindled and the price of fish was going up. In the meanwhile, Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi claimed that oil sardine landings on Kerala coast had shrunk to about 35,000 tonnes (provisional figures) during the last financial year. This is down by more than 10,000 tonnes compared to the previous financial year. “There is a crisis like situation. The fish drought is serious”, he said as he called on the government to declare a package for the coastal community even as the rations and special provision supplies were helping them. The dwindling catch has resulted in the price of all varieties of fish going up sharply even with restrictions on markets imposed on COVID-19 control areas. While there is little oil sardine available, what has passed for the favourite fish in Kerala is the lesser sardine (Karichaala), which is now selling for about ?280 a kg. Shrimp prices are up at about ?550 a kg and premium quality seer (king) fish is being sold for over ?1,000 a kg. Mr. Jayan also said that Kochi harbours were being host to mostly boats coming from outside the district. It is the common practice for fishers to come by road to the different harbours and then venture out into the sea. However, the practice of crowded buses and transport vehicles increases the risk of COVID-19 spread, he added.

Kerala and the Lakshadweep Islands: Heavy rain likely from Thursday, says IMD

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/heavy-rain-likely-in-kerala-and-the-lakshadweep-islands-from-thursday-says-imd/article34540051.ece

"Kerala and the Lakshadweep Islands should brace for heavy rainfall from Thursday onwards, indicated a Wednesday morning weather update by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). It has also upgraded the alert levels for the two regions. The Lakshadweep Islands have been put on red alert on Saturday given the possibility of extremely heavy rainfall and orange alerts for isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall on Friday and Sunday. The IMD warned on Tuesday that a low pressure area likely to take shape in the Arabian Sea by Friday is expected to brew into a cyclone by Sunday over east-central Arabian Sea. The islands and the Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala are on yellow alert on Thursday for isolated heavy rainfall. Orange alerts for heavy to very heavy rainfall have been issued for Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts for Friday; Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts on Saturday; and Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Thrissur, Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode and Wayanad districts on Sunday. Kerala has prohibited fishing activities from Thursday morning. Fishermen have been directed to make for the nearest safe coast by Wednesday night.

Kerala: Fish auctions get a COVID makeover in Thiruvananthapuram

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fish-auctions-get-a-covid-makeover-in-

thiruvananthapuram/article34534708.ece

"Fish auctions have come under tight leash along the coastal belt of Thiruvananthapuram district. The police have made deployments teams to enforce social-distancing norms and regulate entry in such areas that are prone to a COVID-19 spread of alarming proportions. The City police have evolved a system involving circles drawn on sand using chalk powder by way of which the auctioneer stood at the centre and the bidders were positioned at circles around him at a safe distance. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Law and Order, Traffic) Vaibhav Saxena said that the arrangement fostered COVID-appropriate behaviour and marked a shift from the conventional method when fish auctions witness motley crowds of buyers jostling with each other to bid for the day's haul at fishing landing centres. At the Valiyathura fish market, the police have been regulating entry to prevent overcrowding. Besides, no vehicles were permitted within the market area. While the market used to witness the presence of around 200 people on an average during auctions, the number has significantly come down.

"The regulations which were arrived at through deliberations held with fishermen and auctioneers have began to attain results. We have succeeded in taking the local populace into confidence," says Shangumughom Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Nazeer M.A. The winds of change have also reached the Vizhinjam fishing harbour where the harbour committee handpicked over a hundred volunteers to enforce the pandemic norms at all times, especially during the auctions that take place twice or thrice a day depending upon the fish catch. Vizhinjam station house officer Ramesh G. said that volunteers operate round-the-clock and assist the police in enforcing physical-distancing and frequent sanitisation. Vehicles that enter the harbour are tightly screened at the entry points, he added. While fishing has been partially suspended in most areas in view of the inclement weather, the COVID-19 arrangements are bound to be implemented in full swing in the days to come.

Kerala: Beypore, Vellayil harbours to remain closed till May 16

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/beypore-vellayil-harbours-to-remain-closed-till-may-16/article34521060.ece

"Considering harbour areas as high-risk zones, the operations of two more major harbours — Beypore and Vellayil — will be stopped in the district from Monday. The restrictions will be in place till May 16 with police surveillance. The decision was taken in consultation with local harbour development committees, boat owners and fishermen associations after noticing an uncontrolled rush and business activities in the harbours. Moreover, the existing critical containment zone regulations along the coastal area also prompted the authorities to adopt stringent regulatory measures. The Chombal harbour had been recently closed by the authorities following safety concerns raised by local body administrators. According to officials, there were many incidents of COVID-19 protocol

violations. The closure was made subsequent to an inspection carried out by senior Revenue Department officers and the designated Incident Commander.

Though there were recommendations to shut the Beypore harbour as well last week after some of the fishers tested positive for the virus, local harbour management committee members were not in favour of the move. Instead of a sudden closure, they had called for a regulated operation by permitting the entry of only those who carry a COVID-19 negative certificate. However, it failed to work out with the unexpected turnout of fishers and allied workers. Laders of Kerala Fishing Boat Owners and various fishermen associations said the operation of Puthiyappa and Koyilandy harbours would also be stopped as part of the already made agreements with the Fisheries Department. As it was for the safety of fishermen and other coastal families, there were no major oppositions to the proposal, they said. “Though Puthiyappa and Koyilandy harbours are functional now, heightened regulations have almost crippled the usual business activities. We believe that a temporary closure will come to the help of the Health Department to manage the critical situation,” said Karichal Preman, vice president of All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association. He said Fisheries Department officials had already explained the risk factors to all stakeholders in the sector and there would not be any opposition to proceed with the total closure during the lockdown period.

Kerala: Stringent curbs on the cards in fishing harbours

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/stringent-curbs-on-the-cards-in-fishing-harbours/article34499262.ece

"With the State moving into one more lockdown amidst the rising number of COVID-19 cases, more stringent regulations are on the cards for the operation of fishing harbours in Kozhikode district. In critical containment zones, fishers and allied workers who carry a COVID-19 negative certificate will only be permitted to enter harbours. Following the Fisheries Department order, the Beypore harbour is now open only to such persons. Local harbour management committees have been asked to strictly comply with the health protocol and implement regulations. Only wholesale dealers with the required pass will be allowed to take the daily stock. Entry of the public for retail purchase in harbours has been restricted. In view of the State-level lockdown, a fresh guideline with regard to the functioning of harbours will be issued by the district administration on Friday.

There will be separate nodal officers for each harbour to oversee the safety protocol and other local requirements. “Our suggestion is to shut down the operation of all harbours in critical containment zones. Designated nodal officers and harbour development societies concerned will oversee the regulations,” said a senior officer attached to the Fisheries Department. He also made it clear that the regulations would be implemented without creating any hurdle for those already set off for deep sea fishing in trawlers. Meanwhile, fishermen organisations in the

district have called for a “compassionate approach” on the part of the administrators while introducing stringent regulations. According to them, the closure of harbours or denial of fishermen’s entry will make the life miserable for hundreds of poor fish vendors and allied workers.

Kerala: Pandemic, trade barriers hit seafood exports

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/pandemic-trade-barriers-hit-seafood-exports/article34475162.ece

"Marine products exporters have said their business has gone through one of its ""worst years"" in 2020-21 and recorded a drop of turnover and volume of around 20% with markets hit by China being almost closed to India and EEC trade barriers. In an appeal to the Union government, the seafood exporters claimed that Russia and other markets were not being aggressively pursued by the government. The industry had also been affected by the COVID-19 lockdown, affecting the labour flow seriously. Besides, the crash in the price of raw materials had seriously affected the supplies of raw materials. The viability of aquaculture shrimp farming and related activities and capture fisheries have been seriously affected too. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana Scheme will help the fisheries sector both capture and culture mostly at the primary levels of production and infrastructure in the long run. However, there is no direct support to the export sector in the scheme, or even any kind of stimulus offered during the pandemic to any export sector. There is sickness brewing in the sector with many small exporters on the verge of being classified as NPAs, particularly those depending predominantly on the ocean catches or capture fisheries, mostly located on the west coast. Added to this, banks have started increasing interest rates by downgrading the exporters’ credit ratings as they have not been able to keep up with their sales projections owing to the pandemic. The sector is highly employment-oriented, with a workforce of more than 15 million, but it had not been included in the list of sectors for additional financial support by the banks, the exporters said.

Kerala: Forum calls for safety of deep-sea fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/forum-calls-for-safety-of-deep-sea-fishers/article34460251.ece

"The newly floated All India Deep Sea Fishers’ Association, representing around 7,000 fishers mostly from Tuthoor, Vallavila, Chinnathura, Poonthura, Irambiyanthura, Kollamgod South and Neerodi villages, have demanded steps to ensure the safety of deep sea fishers in the wake of a series of accidents that saw fishing boats being hit by merchant navy ships. M. Majeed, secretary of the association, said that deep-sea fishers, in the gillnet and longline boats, numbering around 600 and operating mostly out of Kochi, were not being accounted for now.

The association wants the authorities to keep a record of the number of fishing boats going out into the deep sea on a regular basis and to provide them help in case of accidents. Charles George, president of the association, said deep-sea fishers went close to the coast of Oman for fishing. They are a traditionally skilled community but the governments, both the State and Centre, had not provided them enough protection.

However, he said, it was time that the governments took these fishers into account, provided them security and recognised their knowledge of the fishing grounds along the Indian coast. He said the new association wanted various agencies in the fisheries sector, including the State Fisheries Department, Marine Products Export Development Authority, seafood exporters and other agencies, to come together to help traditional deep-sea fishers, who provide a livelihood to thousands of others. The deep-sea fishers mostly operate out of the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour and facilities like a dormitory should be established to harbour them when they come back to the shore. The new harbour facilities being developed by the Cochin Port Trust and MPEDA would take care of these needs, he added.

Kerala: Pandemic curtails harbour operations in Ernakulam

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/pandemic-curtails-harbour-operations-in-ernakulam/article34458810.ece

"The spread of the fresh wave of COVID-19 has hit fishing harbours in the district, including Chellanam, Thoppumpady, Vypeen, Pallippuram, and Munambam. At the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour, where 20 to 25 boats land with catch on normal days, only two boats arrived on Saturday. The trend is not only because of the pandemic situation but also due to dwindling catch and fewer boats venturing out, said M. Majeed of All India Deep Sea Fishers' Association. He added that both the scarcity of resources and restricted operations on account of COVID-19 had hit fishers' livelihood hard. The situation has been serious since March 2020, and it has lingered on. A senior Fisheries Department official said fishing operations had been regulated through standing orders issued during the first wave of the pandemic. Harbours have management committees to oversee operations in keeping with the COVID-19 protocol. Auctions continue to be banned, and sale of fish takes place on the basis of pre-fixed price for the catch. However, when harbour stakeholders fail to adhere to the pandemic protocol, the authorities are forced to restrict operations. Lockdown in panchayats like Pallippuram has not affected the operation of major harbours like Munabam. The harbour was reopened on the intervention of the authorities following an appeal by stakeholders. The operation of the Chellanam fish landing centre too had been affected by the second wave of the pandemic. P.V. Jayan, a traditional fisherman at Vypeen, said the number of boats venturing out had considerably come down because of poor catch and uncertainties triggered by the pandemic.

Kerala: Square-mesh cod end beneficial to fishers, ecology: Study

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/may/02/square-mesh-cod-end-beneficial-to-fishers-ecology-study-2297495.html

"In a major initiative that can help preserve marine wealth and ensure its sustainability, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have conducted studies which proved that using square-mesh cod end in bottom trawls is beneficial not only for fishers but also for ecology. A recent study by the team in Sakthikulangara fishing harbour, Kollam, proved that replacing traditional diamond mesh cod-end with square mesh codend reduced the juvenile fish and bycatch, that is, fish or other marine species which get caught unintentionally, thereby putting forth a sustainable method of fishing. The field trials conducted by the organisations involved a comparison of hauls caught by identical bottom trawls which were fitted with square mesh cod-end and diamond mesh codend. The study was done using a 25 mm square mesh cod-end which is used for fishing shrimp varieties. Currently, two types of square mesh cod-end are allowed -- 35 mm for fishes and 25 mm for shrimps. “Only the cod-end portion of the trawl net was changed and it is a one-time investment. The bycatch and juvenile fish catch from trawlnets are less when we use square mesh fitted trawlers. The uniform-sized shrimp catch will also increase the price for shrimp when compared to shrimps caught using diamond mesh cod-end,” said Madhu V R, principal secretary, CIFT, who designed the study.

The study involved two trawlers, with the same dimensions and engine power with only change in the cod-end portion of the trawl net. “The catch from the trawler fitted with square cod-end gave a uniform and good haul. It avoids juvenile fish and other debris. Further, there was a better catch and fishers save a lot of time which is otherwise spent on removing the debris and juvenile fish. While using the square mesh cod-end, the juvenile fishes can escape and a thirty per cent survival rate has been observed for juvenile fishes, “ he said. All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners’ Association, Marine Stewardship Council and fisheries department too were associated with the study. “It was crucial that we could impress upon the fishers how beneficial the square mesh cod is for them. Bycatch reduction is a major component. It’s a sustainable method of fishing and protects biodiversity,” said Vinod Malayilethu, team leader, Marine Conservation Programme, WWF India. As the cod end mesh size is changed from diamond to square, juvenile fishes are able to escape. “The principle here is that in a diamond mesh, as the net drags through, the mesh diameter stretches and becomes smaller. Even if you stretch a square mesh, the diameter remains the same. So the juvenile fishes which get caught accidentally can easily move out of the square mesh,” says marine biologist Vinod.

Kerala: Idling boats, fishers anxious on the coast

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/idling-boats-fishers-anxious-on-the-

coast/article34433857.ece

"Hit hard by an unprecedented dip in catch, majority of the fishing boats in Kerala are lying idle for the last few days generating anxiety in the sector. While 80% of the trawlers have stopped venturing into the sea, traditional fishers say there has been an alarming decline in the availability of pelagic fish species such as mackerel and sardine. Though the annual lean season is not over, the fishers say they are facing a fish famine for the first time in several decades. They also feel that this drastic depletion may hint at a change in marine environment and its capacity to replenish fishery stocks. "Along with the low availability of fish, the hike in fuel price has left us in a difficult spot. The diesel price was around Rs.62 last year, but now it has touched Rs.86 which makes a huge difference in total expenditure. If we can't return with a reasonably good catch, the result will be mounting debts and we have decided to stay off waters due to this," says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association.

Fishers say the situation has proved all the normal forecasts wrong and point out many reasons for the famine, including pollution and overfishing. "Only small units are venturing into the sea at present and they are able to survive as the prices have skyrocketed due to the shortage. We agree that this is a lean season, but we have never experienced such scarcity before," says Jackson Pollayil, president, Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation. Since climate change and rising sea temperatures can affect the migratory pattern and stock size of pelagic fish, they also fear that some species might have moved away from the shallow coastal waters. "In the month of April and May we usually harvest mackerel and sardine in huge volumes, but right now both have become rare. Traditional fishers mainly depend on the pelagic stock and now it remains nearly empty." Mr.Pollayil adds that unscientific fishing methods, including pair trawling, too have contributed to the situation.

"They use Chinese engines and multiple gears to sieve all three levels of the sea. They net a lot of juveniles and that part of the catch goes straight to the fish meal fish oil (FMFO) industry. In a sense the ban and regulation on fishing during the early pandemic days helped us as the landings were really good in post-lockdown days," he says. Mr.Mathias says overexploitation can be one main reason as an enormous number of crafts are currently fishing in our sea. "We have boats and crafts three times beyond the capacity of our sea and the government keeps giving permission. At present 80% of boats in the mechanised sector are staying off waters, which is something totally unheard of under normal circumstances. If this continues it will be difficult for the sector to stay afloat," he adds.

Kerala: Association seeks minister's help to locate boat

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/assn-seeks-mins-help-to-locate-boat/articleshow/82263687.cms

"All-India deep-sea fishermen's association has sought the external affairs minister's help to locate a fishing vessel from Tamil Nadu named 'Mercedes', which reportedly capsized after colliding with a large ship on midnight of April 23. 'Mercedes' had ventured for deep sea operations from Kanyakumari and is said to have collided 600 nautical miles off Goa's coast. It is feared that 11 crew members, along with owner Joseph Frangline, have drowned. The vessel had sent an SOS to another boat 'Peirya Nayahi' which found the wreck close to Oman. "Since the incident happened 600 nautical miles away from Indian coast, the search and rescue operation is difficult from the Indian side. Though a coast guard vessel Samudra Prahari is already engaged in rescue operation, that vessel has not yet reached the spot. We request Indian government to seek air support from the Navy for rescue. The ship which hit the fishing vessel should be identified," said Charles George, president of the association. Though the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was approved by India as a signatory, and Indian Maritime Zone Act was enacted in 1981, law and rules for fishing in Indian EEZ and areas beyond natural jurisdiction and adjacent areas have not been implemented. It should be done at the earliest and it should protect the fishing right of fish workers, the association said.

Kerala: Marine stewardship council grant for deep-sea shrimp fishery project in Kerala

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/msc-grant-for-deep-sea-shrimp-fishery-project/articleshow/82246313.cms

"The marine stewardship council (MSC) has announced a grant of Rs 46 lakh to support the fishery improvement project for deep-sea shrimp fishery in Kerala. The fund, which is being awarded through the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-India, is to support the fisheries that are in early stages of improving their management practices. WWF officials said that they are working in collaboration with several local partners in the region to help the fishery move towards MSC certification by 2025. The fishery targets Arabian red shrimp, deep-sea shrimp and Indian nylon shrimp, operating off Kerala's coast, mainly in Kollam bank, where around 80% of Kerala's deep-sea shrimp are caught. Most of the catch is exported to the EU and the US. Alongside sustainability, market access has been a key driving force for the fishery and supporting stakeholders to seek certification.

In 2019, the seafood exporters association of India (SEAI) and the forum for deep-sea shrimp sustainability developed an action plan and initiated an MSC pre-assessment. This showed that improved research is vital to help the fishery managers understand the stock status of the shrimp and to inform the development of harvest strategies for the fishery to demonstrate its practices are sustainable. WWF-India will work with industry, government, fishers and NGO stakeholders to undertake a stock assessment and determine a reference point for sustainable fishing. Their ocean stewardship fund grant will also help the fishery meet other requirements for certification, such as reducing bycatch and assessing local habitat and ecosystem

impacts.As most fisheries resources are overexploited in India, bringing sustainability is the only way by which the resources can be conserved and protected for future generations. This funding will help enable us to implement the fishery improvement project activities for these species of shrimp which are of great commercial importance," said Vinod Malayilethu, team leader of the WWF-India marine conservation programme.

The marine stewardship council's consultant in India, Ranjit Suseelan, said that the seafood exporters association of India has prioritised the sustainability of fisheries with the foresight that good business relies on sustainable resources.Also, the government of India has developed and commenced with the implementation of several policies and improvement tools to support resource conservation and sustainable harvesting in India," he said. "The fisheries department aims to manage the fishery resources of the Kerala coast in a sustainable manner without harming the livelihood of those who are dependent on it. We are certain that the MSC grant will aid us in bringing forth our effort to manage the region's resources sustainably," said Smitha Nair, joint director of fisheries.

Kerala: Alert on coastal swell surge

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/alert-on-coastal-swell-surge/article34415291.ece

"Rough seas expected near low-lying coastal areas till April 28. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has put the Kerala coast on a swell surge alert till April 28. The sea will be rough close to the shore and low-lying coastal areas in Kollam, Alappuzha, Kochi, Ponnani, Kozhikode, Kannur, Kasargod are likely to experience surges intermittently till the night of April 28 during high tide. Swell waves with a height of one to 1.5 metres are likely along the coast, INCOIS said. Fishermen and coastal populations have been advised to remain cautious. Plying boats near the coast should be avoided. Boats should be anchored at a fair distance from each other, to avoid damage from collisions. Water-based recreational activities along the coast and taking boats out from the shore should be avoided, INCOIS and the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority said. However, deep-sea fishing can be carried out as the effects of swell surge in the open ocean is likely to be minimal.

Kerala: Fishers seek a study into catch 'drought'

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-seek-a-study-into-catch-drought/article34377106.ece

"Fishers have said that there is a 'drought-like' situation in the fishing sector, with pelagic fish catch falling drastically this season. "The fish scarcity has never been so severe," said Jackson Pollayil of the National Fish Workers' Forum, calling on the Union and State governments to undertake a scientific investigation into the phenomenon that has left thousands

of fishers in dire straits. The period just before monsoon is when fishers catch the bulk of pelagic fish. But this season has seen a severe shortage of fish, resulting in the fishing community suffering extensive losses, he said. “The government must study the cause for the fall in catch as well as on the methods and vessels being used by fishers,” he added. ‘Social catastrophe’ Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi, a trade union of traditional fishers, said the COVID-19-induced lockdown and subsequent restrictions had delivered a big blow to fishers who make a living by day-to-day operations.

The rising cost of fuel and the restricted fishing days have been huge setbacks in the recent times. He said the government should address the issues of sustainability, livelihood, and marketing of the catch. The issue of a severe fall in catch should be addressed. He claimed that oil sardine landing during 2019-20 had fallen to about 35,000 tonnes. This is a ‘social catastrophe’ and a serious livelihood issue, he added. Trawling ban Meanwhile, the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators’ Association has written to the Union government that the move to extend the monsoon trawling ban, usually in place from June 1 and July 31, to 61 days would severely affect the mechanised fishing sector. The fishing ban for a ‘long period’ of 61 days would worsen the already precarious financial position of more than 3.5 lakh people directly and indirectly engaged in this sector, the boat operators said. The Union government had reduced the ban period to 47 days on appeal from the fishing community but the Kerala government extended it to 52 days last year. The ban came immediately after the restrictions imposed by the State to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Kerala: Fishers in troubled waters yet again

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/fishers-in-troubled-waters-yet-again/article34381049.ece

"Unfavourable weather conditions and the pandemic scare have once again driven fishermen into crisis. Consequent to the mass return of migrant fishers and allied workers to their respective States following the COVID-19 spread, many small and medium boat owners from Kozhikode district are calling off deep sea fishing and exploring options to survive the lean period. A situation akin to the trawl ban prevails at most harbours, with the number of anchored boats going up by the day. Fishermen from Puthiyappa and Beypore harbours said they were in deep crisis, and that they had no option but to cancel trips to save on fuel and labour expenses. “The sea has been turbulent for weeks making survival tough for small and medium boat owners. Though a few ventured into the rough sea, the catch was poor. We fear that the situation may prevail for a few more weeks,” said Irfan Habeeb, a fisherman from Vellayil harbour. He pointed out that several jobless fishers had opted for construction work. Fishermen from the Puthiyappa harbour said they were not even getting enough revenue to manage operational costs thanks to the fall in fisheries resources.

They argued that at least Rs. 40,000 was required, including the fuel cost, to prepare a medium-size boat for a single trip. But the income generated is not even sufficient to meet the operational expenses. “A majority of migrant fishers from Odisha and Maharashtra have already returned home in the wake of the alarming COVID-19 spread. Only trawler boats with better facilities will be able to survive the crisis,” said Karichal Preman, vice president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association. He felt that the recurring accidents involving ships and fishing boats had deepened the sense of insecurity among fishers. Feeling blue, leaders of fishermen’s associations have called upon the State government and the Fisheries Department to address joblessness in the sector and provide relief packages.

Kerala: Use of square mesh cod-ends to benefit fishers, finds study

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/use-of-square-mesh-cod-ends-to-benefit-fishers-finds-study/article34353988.ece

"The deployment of square mesh cod-ends in trawling operations considerably reduces by-catch and improves sustainability of fishing operations, say studies conducted under the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) in cooperation with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Mandapam, Tamil Nadu, and the All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association in Kollam. Scientists associated with the study said the implementation of the Kerala Marine Fishing Regulation Act, which prescribed the use of square mesh cod-ends in small and big trawlers, would go a long way in providing long-term benefits for fishers and help maintain a sustainable marine ecosystem. Field trials to demonstrate the utility of square mesh cod-ends in place of diamond cod-ends in trawl nets were carried out at Shakthikulangara fishing harbour, Kollam, where two trawlers with the same dimension and engine power but with different cod-ends were selected for demonstrations in February this year.

No changes were made in the traditional fishing methods used by the fishers in the region. Only the cod-end portion of the trawl net was changed for the studies. Chinnadurai S., scientist, and Nobi P.S. and Dhijudas P.H., technical officers from ICAR-CIFT, were present to manage the fishing operations and collect and quantify the catch. Fishers were actively involved in the study to gain first-hand knowledge of the process and experience the difference in catch and price obtained. The study results showed that the size of the shrimps caught in square mesh cod-ends had increased by 10% and revenue from the fishing expedition increased by 23.7%. The fishers were satisfied with the catch with lesser quantity of debris and juveniles when compared to to the traditional diamond mesh cod-ends.

Kerala: Farmers call for steps to protect pokkali rice cultivation

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/farmers-call-for-steps-to-protect-pokkali-rice-cultivation/article34362777.ece

"Pokkali farmers have reiterated their demand that the district administration and the Agriculture Department should do what is needed to protect the unique rice farming system following an order from the High Court of Kerala. The Pokkali Samrakshana Samithi, working to protect the practice of pokkali rice cultivation, said in a statement that facilities should be put in place to drain saltwater from the pokkali fields to prepare them for rice cultivation in June as the monsoon sets in. The Samithi said the crop calendar, with the one-fish-one-rice cycle, should be maintained and that shrimp culture could not be allowed throughout the year. The Samithi said that with aquaculture gaining dominance, rice cultivation had been abandoned and that it had become impossible to continue with pokkali rice cultivation. The High Court had issued an order that the fields should be drained following a petition filed by pokkali farmer Manjadiparambil Chantu, said the Samithi. The pokkali rice cycle is between April 15 and November 15. The remaining period was used for shrimp and fish culture, which mutually supported each other, said Francis Kalanthungal of the Samithi. He said the cycle had been upset over several seasons and the pokkali rice cultivation faced the threat of being totally wiped out.

Kerala: Hundreds of dead fish wash up at riverbank

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/hundreds-dead-fish-wash-kerala-riverbank-residents-concerned-147324

"On Tuesday, residents living near Thamalam in Thiruvananthapuram, on the banks of the Karamana river, saw a huge swarm of predatory birds fly down to eat a number of dead fish that were floating on the water and had washed ashore. The fish, which included many small varieties of fish including karimeen, have started to decay, which has caused a foul smell to persist. “When the birds began to fly down in large numbers, I noticed the dead fish. A foul smell also began emanating from the river. I have been living here for 10 years, and this is the first time this has happened,” TC Cherian, a resident of Pearl Garden on the banks of the Karmana river told TNM. The river originates from the Western Ghats and flows through the city of Thiruvananthapuram. According to Cherian, the City Corporation later buried the fish that had washed ashore. However, as several fish started to decompose, the birds disappeared as well. “There were no birds after the first day, as the fish began decaying slowly.

The disappearance of the birds also seems strange. The death of the fish in bulk needs to be examined, as the Karamana river is a source of drinking water too,"" Dinesh Kumar, a resident of Pearl Garden who is also a psychiatrist, told TNM. Drinking water from

Thiruvananthapuram comes from upstream of the river. Both the Aruvikkara and Peppara dams are built over the river. ""We drink the water of the river; I grew up on its banks. We have never witnessed anything like this. This is the water pumped from the dam and provided to people,"" Rajan, a native of Thamalam in Thiruvananthapuram told TNM. Rajan and his friend Nandu, who are both in their 60s, said that this was the first time they witnessed the fish washing ashore as well. They allege that authorities have not taken adequate steps to investigate the matter. Both the residents alleged that Thiruvananthapuram Mayor Arya Rajendran, who is also the ward councillor, had not taken cognisance of the incident. However, the Mayor has rejected this claim. ""A similar incident happened on the river bank at Mudavanmukal too. The river flows from Mudavanmukal to Thamalam. The Corporation has reported this to both the Fisheries Department and to the Pollution Control Board and is awaiting the report,"" she said, adding that the incident was discussed during the Corporation council meeting on Thursday.

Kerala: Now, an e-portal for aqua farmers

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/now-an-e-portal-for-aqua-farmers/articleshow/82055227.cms

"Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday virtually inaugurated eSaNTA, an electronic marketplace to connect aqua farmers and buyers. The platform would enable farmers to get a better price and exporters to directly purchase quality products from farmers thereby enhancing traceability, a key factor in international trade. The term eSaNTA, electronic solution for augmenting national centre for sustainable aquaculture (NaCSA) farmers' trade in aquaculture, was coined for the web portal. NaCSA is an extension arm of marine products export development authority (MPEDA), which is under the ministry of commerce & industry. The portal is a completely paperless and end-to-end electronic trade platform between farmers and exporters. Farmers have the freedom to list their produce and quote their price while exporters have the freedom to list their requirements and also to choose the products based on their requirements such as desired size, location, harvest dates etc. Speaking on the occasion, Goyal said that eSaNTA would raise income, lifestyle, self-reliance, quality levels, traceability, and provides new options for aqua farmers.

He said that the platform would change the traditional way of carrying out business from a word-of-mouth marketing to become more formalized and legally binding. He said that eSaNTA would raise the lives and income of farmers by reducing risk, awareness of products and markets, increase in income, shielding against wrong practice and ease of processes. The minister said that the portal was a digital bridge to end the market divide and would act as an alternative marketing tool between farmers and buyers by eliminating middlemen. It would revolutionize traditional aqua farming by providing cashless, contactless and paperless electronic trade platform between farmers and exporters, he added. "The portal can become a

tool to advertise collectively the kind of products the buyers, fishermen and fish producing organizations are harvesting. People in India and abroad can know what is available. In the future, it can become an auction platform," he added. The platform is available in many languages. It provides detailed specification of each product and it is backed by an end-to-end electronic payment system with NaCSA as an escrow agent. After crop listing and online negotiation, a deal is struck, advance payment is made and an estimated invoice is generated. Once the harvest date is fixed, the buyer goes to the farm gate and the produce is harvested in his/her presence. Once the harvest is completed, the final count and quantity of material is verified, the final amount is decided and delivery challan is issued. Once the material reaches the processing plant, the final invoice is generated and the exporter makes the balance payment. This payment is reflected in the escrow account. NaCSA verifies it and accordingly releases the payment to farmers.

Kerala: NABARD extends financial assistance of Rs 13,425 cr during FY 2020-21

https://www.uniindia.com/nabard-extends-financial-assistance-of-rs-13-425-cr-in-kerala-during-fy-2020-21/south/news/2370981.html

"NABARD disbursed all time high financial assistance of Rs 13,425 crore in Kerala by way of refinance and direct finance during the FY 2020-21, registering an impressive growth rate of 26 per cent over the previous FY. An amount of Rs 12,847 crore towards refinance assistance was disbursed to various banks such as Kerala State Cooperative Bank (KSCB), Kerala Gramin Bank (KGB), Kerala State Cooperative Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (KSCARDB) and a few Commercial Banks towards priority sector lending activities, a press release said here on Wednesday.This includes Short Term Loans of Rs 9,252 crore for financing Seasonal Agricultural operations (Crop loans) and working capital limits under MSME sector. The rest of the refinance amounting Rs 3,595 crore was disbursed as Long Term Loans for financing Investment credit sector activities under Agriculture and allied activities and MSME sector.During the year 2020-21, NABARD sanctioned projects worth Rs 538 crore to Government of Kerala under its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) which included 6 Public Health Institutions in 4 districts viz; Kollam, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kannur districts with a loan of Rs 74.15 crore and fishing harbours amounting to Rs 54.57 crore.Further, establishment of milk powder unit in Malappuram district amounting loan of Rs. 32.72 crore, Nile Tilapia Hatchery in Kollam district involving loan of Rs 11.60 crore and two drinking water projects involving loan of Rs 60.81 crore in Kollam and Idukki districts were other major projects sanctioned during 2020-21.Besides the above, NABARD also provided Rs 30 crore as grant assistance towards Banks, NGOs and State Kudumbashree Mission for supporting developmental activities and initiatives under its various Developmental Funds during the FY 2020-21.

The major grant assisted activities include Rs 12 cr under Watershed Development Fund (WDF) in Palakkad, Kasargode and Wayanad districts and Rs 4 crore under Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) for purchase of mobile Vans by KSCB and KGB, purchase of micro ATMs and conduct of Financial Literacy programmes by eligible Financial institutions.Further, Rs 3 crore assistance each was extended to tribal development activities under Tribal Development Fund (TDF) and supporting micro credit development activities of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) under Financial Inclusion Fund (FIF) respectively.The other important activities supported include conduct of two handloom exhibitions, promotion of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and training of Cooperative Bank Personnel.

Kerala: Fisher unions oppose move to close case against Italian marines

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/apr/10/fisher-unions-oppose-move-to-close-case-against-italian-marines-2288144.html

"The fishermen unions in Kerala on Friday opposed the move by the Union government to withdraw the case against the two Italian marines accepting the compensation offered to the victims. The Supreme Court on Friday observed that the criminal cases pending against marines Salvatore Girone and Massimiliano Latorre, who gunned down two Indian fishermen off Kollam coast in Kerala, can be closed only after Italy deposits Rs 10 crore as compensation for the families of victims. “We are of the opinion that the marines should be tried under the Indian law as the crime occurred in Indian waters. Though the families of the victims have accepted the compensation following the intervention of the Church, the case should not be withdrawn. The government has to ensure the safety of Indian fishermen and they should be tried under the Indian law to avoid such incidents in future,” said Kerala Traditional Fishermen Association president P V Janardhanan. Coordination Committee of Fishermen Unions said the Union government, which has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Indian fishermen, has bowed under pressure from Italy.

The stand of the Union and state governments that the case can be withdrawn if compensation is provided cannot be accepted. The trial for murder should continue to ensure that such incidents do not happen in future,” said state president Charles George. However, the family of Valantine Jalastine, one of the fishermen who was shot dead by the Italian marines, said they have given the consent to end the case accepting compensation as the case was dragging. “I don’t personally feel that the case should be withdrawn. But we had signed the consent letter. I was writing my Plus-II board exams when my father was shot dead by the marines on February 15, 2012. Our family was devastated and we struggled to survive. My mother Dora was given a job in the fisheries department which helped me complete my BTech course. My brother has completed his degree course. Italy has provided us a compensation of Rs 1 crore,” Derik, son of Valantine Jalastine, told TNIE. The Kerala government has proposed `4 crore each to the

families of the two fishermen. Freddy John Bosco, owner of St Antony, the boat destroyed in the incident will get `2 crore as compensation. “I was ruined after the incident and could not return to my job as the captain of the fishing boat. In 2016, I started a textile shop. I gave the consent to end the case as the compensation will help me settle my liabilities,” Freddy said. Enrica Lexie Case 1) Valantine Jalastine and Ajesh Binki on board fishing boat named St Antony gunned down by two Italian Marines on board oil tanker M V Enrica Lexie around 20 nautical miles off Kollam. 2) Indian Coast Guard intercepts ship and detains the marines. 3) Kerala police slap murder charges on the marines and arrest them. 4) Case taken over by the NIA. 5) Marines allowed to return to Italy. 6) Italian government argues fishing vessel had approached close to the ship and marines fired mistaking it as a pirate attack. 7) 2015- Italy approaches International Tribunal for Law of the Sea. 8) Aug 24, 2015- Tribunal directs both countries to suspend all court proceedings. 9) July 2019- Matter reaches Permanent Court of Arbitration. 10) May 2020- Court orders that marines will face criminal proceedings in Italy, not India. 11) July 2020- Centre informs SC that it has accepted the tribunal order and wants to dispose of proceedings against marines.

Kerala: Boat operators’ seek relief from fishing ban

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/boat-operators-seek-relief-from-fishing-ban/article34295849.ece

"All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators’ Association president Peter Mathias and general secretary Joseph Xaviver Kalapurackal have said that imposing a fishing ban for 61 days between June 1 and July 31, 2021, on the west coast of the country would bring great difficulties to the fishing community as a whole. They said that the fishing community was already suffering from the lockdown imposed to contain COVID-19. Imposing more restrictions in the coming days would only deepen their problems, they said. More than 3.5 lakh people depend on the fishing sector directly and indirectly for making a living. Long-term restrictions on their activities would deepen the economic crisis among them, they added.

The association highlighted that though the same length of period was notified last year, the appeal from the fishing community to the central government had resulted in reducing the period to 47 days. With the second stage of the pandemic tightening its grip there is tangible signs that thousands who solely depend on sea resources for their livelihood will be affected. Under these circumstances and in the background of global warming and erratic climatic conditions the fishers need to be protected, they said. The association also said that the spiralling price of diesel had put the sector in great trouble. With such uncertainties in the catch, fishing expeditions had become unprofitable and the situation could be mitigated if fishing is permitted during the monsoon season. The price of retail fish selling too had been affected due to the changes in consumer habits during the pandemic. Consumers who have been

affected by the restrictions are not in a position to pay more for their daily necessities and the situation has had its impact on the fishing sector too.

Kerala: Allow fishing boats to venture into deep sea, plead operators

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/allow-kerala-fishing-boats-to-venture-into-deep-sea-plead-operators/article34261581.ece

"Mechanised fishing boat operators in Kerala are insisting that they be allowed to carry out fishing in deep sea waters like their counterparts in other States and countries. The operators, who are curbed by the State Government not permitting them to venture out into the deep sea, have pleaded their case with the Union Government. While fishing boats in the State are not allowed, trawlers, particularly from China, are allowed to venture into deep sea. All-weather employment Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of All Kerala Mechanised Fishing Boat Operators Association, said fishermen in the State are capable of fishing in deep waters, and to any extent, if permitted. If permission is granted to them, the presence of Chinese fishing trawlers could be deterred, he said, adding that there are about 800 Chinese fishing boats currently engaged in fishing in the Arabian Sea.

In a memorandum submitted to the visiting Union Fisheries Minister Giriraj Singh, the Association requested that fishing should be made an all-weather employment with many expatriates migrating to fishing as a vocation after having lost their jobs. The association also sought the Minister's intervention to urge the State Government to not impose a fee on fishing boats that operate beyond 12 nautical miles. Other State governments are not levying any such fee. The sea and its resources beyond 12 nautical miles from shore fall within the jurisdiction of the Union Government, Kalapurackal argued. Subsidised fuel Fishing has become a high-cost venture, in view of the rising price of diesel. The association urged the government to provide fuel to fishing boats at a reduced or subsidised rate to help the industry. Of late, the fishing sector. including its subsidiaries, is passing through a critical phase on account of a host of issues that include shortage of fish in the seas due to climate change, Covid-related restrictions, etc. This has impacted more than three lakh fish workers and their families.

Kerala: Net gains: How India trawlers' plastic catch is helping to rebuild roads

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/apr/01/fishing-kerala-environment-cleaning-ocean-plastic-waste-building-roads

"For years, plastic caught by fishing communities on the Kollam coast in India's southern state of Kerala was thrown back into the water, damaging aquatic ecosystems and killing fish. But fishers are spearheading an innovative initiative to clean up the ocean – along with their

daily hauls of fish, they pull in and collect the waste that gets enmeshed in their nets. Bottles, ropes, toys, shoes, discarded fishing nets and polythene bags are sorted, washed, shredded, before being recycled into material added to asphalt to help to build local roads. In 2017, the Keralan government's harbour engineering department (HED) launched its Suchitwa Sagaram (Clean Sea) initiative, providing nylon bags to the 1,000-odd fishing boats for the crew to collect the rubbish. The plastic is processed onshore and fed into a shredding machine, then sold on to road builders. Nearly 3,000 fishers and boat owners in Kollam are involved in the initiative. Now the programme is expanding to other harbours and with one million people working in the fishing industry in Kerala, of whom 25% are directly involved in fishing, scaling up the project could have a real impact. Peter Mathias, president of the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association, says: "Previously, we didn't care much about the plastic we collected in our nets. We'd simply take the fish and toss the rest back into the ocean. But not any more – we're now protecting the ocean to save our livelihoods. Had we continued to be reckless, there wouldn't have been any more fish for us to catch."

Washing and sorting the collected plastic is also providing jobs to a small group of local women in a traditionally male-dominated sector. "Most of the garbage is too mangled to recycle in traditional ways. So we shred it into strips and sell it to local construction companies, who mix it with asphalt to construct roads. This helps us pay the women's salaries. This road surface is increasingly popular as it makes the roads more resilient to India's extreme heat," says VK Lotus, an engineer with the HED. "Every kilometre of plastic road uses the equivalent of a million plastic bags, saving around one tonne of asphalt. This not only saves the environment but also cuts costs by roughly 8–10% per kilometre of road paved with plastic as compared with a conventionally built road," she says. Since its launch, about 80,000kg of plastic waste has been collected from the seas off Kollam, of which more than half was recycled to lay 84 miles (135km) of road. The project has resonated with many fishing communities – including clam collectors and divers – along Kerala's 375-mile (600km) coastline. Other groups are now approaching government departments and aid organisations to mobilise funds to help launch their own plastic collection and recycling programmes.

The initiative has not only brought in tangible economic gains for Kollam but ushered in a major shift in the fishing community's perspective about their environment. They now try to ensure that local people and tourists do not litter the land or sea with rubbish, and have pledged to cut back on their own use of plastic. "Our boats also carry stickers to create awareness against marine pollution," adds Mathias. However, due to the Covid pandemic, the project has hit a bump. Work has slowed down and with rising fuel prices, fewer fishing boats are going to sea. "On average," says Mathias, "a vessel travels 45 kilometres into the ocean to fish, requiring 500 litres of diesel. However, the government has stopped our diesel subsidy, so we now have to pay about 80p for one litre of diesel instead of the previous 55p. This has affected our income drastically." But the project must continue, says Mathias, who believes the

community has never before been so united and effective in protecting the ocean. “Our future depends on it. Our children are also getting inspired, which can be life-transforming,” he says.

Kerala: Worry over fish drought, rights over resources

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/worry-over-fish-drought-rights-over-resources/article34207567.ece

"The continuing fish drought, proposals that threaten the rights of traditional fishers over the sea and its fish resources, a lack of initiatives for protecting the coast in places such as Chellanam and Fort Kochi, continuous threat of eviction and rising price of kerosene and diesel are giving nightmares to the fishing community, which has slammed the “apathy” displayed by successive governments to their plight. While the government is sternly denying housing rights to fishers in the coastal areas under the cover of Coastal Regulation Zone, the State has not come forward to tell the people whether it has made a proper survey of the situation. Which is the survey on which the government is denying poor fishers their right to have residences, asks Raju Asrayam, a fisherman. The traditional fishing community must be given the rights they truly deserve. They should have the first rights over sea resources just as Adivasis and other communities have a right over the forests in the country, says Anthony Kurisinkal in Arthunkal. He says the new government should address the issue seriously and not gloss over it as had happened in the past.

All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalapurakkal says that the new government should address the issue of how Kerala fishers, who are extremely talented, are being kept away from deep sea fishing under one excuse or the other. The devastating effect of COVID-19 needs to be addressed as the fishing sector directly employs around three-lakh people, he says. Charles George of Fisheries Coordination Committee says that the new government must first formulate a fish drought package for the community of fishers because they are reeling under an unprecedented fall in fish landings. Besides, the issue of petroleum price hike is so serious that it has turned all fishing expeditions uneconomic. Mr. Asrayam also expresses anxiety about the proposals under the Blue Economy by the Union government, which will, he feels, turn traditional fishers out of the marine economy. There will be several zones and fishers will be restricted to a particular fishing zone and the proposals will have serious impact. The new State government should surely take these worries into serious consideration, he says. Jackson Pollayil, State president, Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, says that while relief measures are needed to ease the lives of fishers, the broader and deeper issue of environmental protection should be taken up for action by the new government. Residents in the coastal areas in the district, stretching from South Chellanam through Fort Kochi and Vypeen say that coastal protection measures have been lagging. A resident of Chellanam, T.A. Dalphin, says that successive governments ignored

coastal people. The issue must be addressed now, he says.

Kerala: State has no right to ink fishing deal

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/kerala-has-no-right-to-ink-fishing-deal/article34194374.ece

"Accusing the Kerala government of betraying the fishing community, Union Minister for Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Giriraj Singh on Monday said the State had no right to ink the deep-sea fishing deal with U.S.-based EMCC International. The Centre will reject any such agreement, he said. "The State government had no right to ink such an agreement. Beyond the 12-nautical-mile mark, sea-related activities are regulated by the Central government. Whatever agreement Kerala has entered into with the foreign company, the Government of India will reject it," Mr. Singh told a press conference here. Mr. Singh, who is in the State as part of a National Democratic Alliance election campaign, said fishermen have been approaching him wherever he went with the demand that they be rescued from the deal. The concerns of the Church in this regard were shared by the Bishop of Alappuzha of the Catholic Church James Anaparambil when the Minister called on him on Sunday. Mr. Singh said that Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has not contacted him even once in her official capacity. The Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation's (KSINC) Rs. 2,950-crore pact with EMCC International, which included the construction of 400 deep-sea trawlers, had kicked up a political controversy.

However, the State government had been forced to cancel the agreement in the face of stiff opposition. The 222 notified fishing villages on the Kerala coast will be developed as smart villages in a phased manner, the Union Minister said. Efforts are also on to increase the incomes of the fishermen, while at the same time reducing the risk they face at sea. As part of this cage culture will be promoted in the near-shore waters along the Kerala coast and also the backwaters, he said. Mr. Singh said voters in Kerala are yearning for a change from the LDF and the UDF. The LDF government in Kerala is nothing but a 'commission government' that has been encouraging goondaism, love jihad and smuggling, he alleged. Likening the LDF and UDF to 'nagnath' (cobra) and 'saampnath' (snake), Mr. Singh said what Kerala needed is 'Vikasnath' (NDA).

Kerala: A tale of woe and neglect along Thiruvanathapuram coast

https://www.nationalheraldindia.com/india/a-tale-of-woe-and-neglect-along-thiruvanathapuram-coast

"All along the Thiruvananthapuram coast from Shankhumukham, Valiyathura, Cheriyathura, Thoppu to Poonthura, all you will hear are tales of woe. At Beemapally, near Poonthura, it is particularly worse. As soon as one turns into Muslim-majority Beemapally,

broken homes, overflowing sewage, half-built groynes and a thin sandy beach littered with garbage is what can be seen. Youngsters in the area were cleaning up the beach because they were going to hold prayers to be able to catch fish. The local fishermen have not seen a good haul for more than eight months. This has them worried. The fishermen in the area use the traditional gill nets (kambavala) and seine boats (thattamadi), but they have not been able to get a good haul. It takes at least 40 fishermen to work on the kambavala, but with hardly any fish being captured and each venture into the sea costs Rs 15,000. “When we come back empty handed, the loss accrues. The problem is that fishermen from the nearby villages have been helped by various co-operative societies and they go out to fish in the night. When they do that, they capture all the fish by early morning, leaving nothing for us,” lamented Mohd Hussain, the owner of a boat. He was talking about fishermen from neighbouring Christian villages going out in the night on motorised boats for fishing carrying heavy lights. The continued erosion of the shore has them worried too.

“The coast has begun receding at a quicker pace once the construction at the Vizhinam port began. The sea had eaten into the entire shore till a few months ago. This pavement did not exist either. This pavement and the streetlight were rebuilt only recently by the MLA VS Sivakumar and MP Shashi Tharoor,” said Aboobacker, a fisherman. He added that these constructions were only temporary solutions as the sea was eating into their land.We have had to rebuild our house multiple times. If you walk along this coast, you will see crumbled structures. These used to be homes of our brothers, but the sea destroyed it,” asserted Aboobacker. The beach was where they used to dry the kambavala, but now there is hardly any space to dry the nets. “The children here used to play football, that’s how spacious the beach was. Now, the beach has become a narrow strip,” said Imtiaz. The wounds of Cyclone Ockhi are yet to heal here. “The government had promised several things. No one in Beemapally got any compensation for the destroyed homes, for the nets and the boats. No one from the LDF government can ever come here and make such a claim,” added Hussain. This time too the votes are likely to go in favour of UDF’s Sivakumar, whom they insist has helped them more than the government.

“The politicians come here during the election and then they mostly forget about us. We continue to remain poor. During Covid-19, we got kits, but that was not enough to sustain the entire family. The government forbade us from going into the sea last year. How can we not go to the sea?” said Aboobacker. According to AJ Vijayan, an environmentalist and a former member of Coastal Watch, Beemapally is usually a forgotten constituency. “As you travel along the coast, you will see the number of groynes are fewer in Beemapally, rehabilitation work is much less. It is because the community doesn’t hold much political clout. Also, Beemapally fishermen continue to use the traditional method of fishing and it is tied to their culture, so they are unlikely to move away from it,” explained Vijayan. He is also the founder-member of the National Fish Workers Forum. Groynes are only a temporary solution,

underscored Vijayan, and that too has not been done properly in Beemapally. “Here co-operative societies are inactive and in other places the church is active and that ensures an ear from politicians,” added Vijayan. In Poonthura too, most houses were destroyed and the shells of those houses remain along the coast.

“During Ockhi the sea destroyed our homes. At that time only Sivakumar came to our help. He came here when we could not go fishing during Covid-19 lockdown. CPI(M)’s Anthony Raju appears only during election season. We never see him after that. All we want is a harbour in Poonthura, but fisheries minister Mercykutty Amma says it would never happen,” said Susheela Jeyaras, a resident of Poonthura. At Shankhumukham, the shore erosion has reached a critical stage where the entire stretch of the beach and the adjacent road were swept away last year. “This worsened after they built the Vizhinjam breakwater. Now, they are building a wall along the coast. How will we access the shore? No politician ever thinks about our future,” said Mary, who was selling fish on the broken portion of the road. Breakwaters are barriers constructed in the middle of the sea to control the waves and ensure calm waters. Of the 3.5 km-long breakwater required for the port, construction of around 650 metre structure has been completed. Vijayan asserted that the government was building the sea wall because they are afraid the sea would encroach the runaway.

“All this erosion began after 1970 when they began the fishing harbour construction in Poonthura. Then erosion began on the northern side and accretion started on the southern side. When the erosion began in 1970, more than 500 houses were lost. Then people were living on the Western side. As the sea encroached, they moved to the Eastern side, where they continue to live. Only the older generation knows about this. I grew up there, so I remember,” added Vijayan. He added that the “sea is attacking us, but this is a man-made issue”. Along the West Coast, the sand and sediment move towards north along the West Coast and south towards Kanyakumari. When there is a construction along the coast, it blocks the movement of the sand. Initially, the erosion was only in Ponthura and to stop it sea walls were constructed. “The sea wall in Poonthura has been rebuilt seven times. If you dig, you will see piles of stones. They have all crumbled when the sea takes over. The current sea wall in Poonthura is hardly two years old. There is heavy erosion during the south west monsoon months of May-September, so there won’t be any beach in most places along the coast.

There is minor erosion during the north east monsoon between December and January, hence the sand movement along the coast is slow, so a thin beach strip is visible,” explained Vijayan. The MS Swaminathan CRZ report of 2005 had highlighted that coastal erosion was a major concern along Kerala’s coast. “The agency considering hard measures, particularly groynes or breakwaters should be made responsible for protecting the shoreline at least 500 metre on either side of the shoreline from erosion. In case of breakwaters for harbours, the stretch of the shoreline to be considered for protection should be at least one km on either side of the

structure," the report had mentioned. But courts and governments do not pay heed to any complaints of sand erosion. "We live at the mercy of the sea which can turn ferocious any time. The politicians and governments change, but no one thinks about our future," bemoaned K Patrik, a fisherman from Valiyathura.

Kerala: Sea of troubles for fisher families on the shore

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/mar/27/sea-of-troubles-for-fisher-families-on-the-shore-2282158.html

"Travelling through the coastal stretch straddling Ernakulam and Alappuzha districts, one can only marvel at the panoramic view of the ocean and the hubbub of the fisher families living on the shore. But just as the calm and inviting ocean is a deceptive camouflage for its ferociousness, the fishing community remains a simmering pot of discontent beneath their calm demeanour as they stare at a slew of problems, ranging from sea erosion and depleting marine resources to the potential intrusion by multinational companies threatening their already fragile livelihood. The TNIE team that visited the coastal village of Chellanam met a community that was inundated in a deluge of woes. Elections don't excite them because they have met politicians of myriad hues. A long list of failed promises has made them sceptical of politics. "Every election, politicians approach us with a slew of empty promises like the construction of the sea wall, tube wall and groynes to check coastal erosion.

Nothing has materialised. Whenever the sea turns rough, the village gets flooded in waist-deep water and we are forced to shift to relief camps like refugees. How can we sleep peacefully when the sea turns rough and the 20-year-old sea wall has broken?" asked Treesa Kuttappasery, a villager. Drinking water scarcity is another problem faced by Chellanam. "Giving food kits during Covid crisis had helped assuage our hunger. But who will guard us against the raging sea?" asked G V Biju. Besides, the lockdown has left the coastal populace jobless. "We used to go fishing in our traditional boats. However, the depletion of marine wealth and increase in the number of mechanised boats have resulted in a low catch. We are struggling to make both ends meet," he added. Not only fishermen, but the boat owners, fish vendors and middlemen in the harbour are also facing the heat of depleting sea wealth and increasing fuel prices. "A fishing boat which goes out to the deep sea will take around seven to 12 days before it returns to the harbour. This means, on average, 3,000 litres of diesel is needed. The cost of the fuel has nearly doubled -- from Rs 1.5 lakh in 2019 to Rs 2.5-2.75 lakh.

The additional expenses include the cost of repairing the fishing nets. Each fisherman has to be paid 'bata' and 40 per cent of the price of the catch has to be given to the workers of the boat," said Gireesh P P, Munambam Matsyamekhala Samrakshana Samithi chairman.Irrespective of their political differences, they said the contract with EMCC International India, which was cancelled after it kicked up a major controversy, will become a talking point in coastal areas.

“Contracts like these which allow foreign trawlers to fish in our seas will affect the fisher folk and may lead to unscientific deep-sea fishing. Already, the fish wealth in our sea has depleted,” said Rajeev K B, managing director, Munambam Fish Traders’ Association. The increasing pollution, waste dumping, especially plastic waste, and unscientific fishing are the main reasons for the depletion of sea wealth. “In the past, there was a plan to launch a programme under which the fishermen would be paid if they returned with plastic that get caught in their nets. However, that plan was not implemented effectively,” said Jackson Pollayil, state president of Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. He said similar to the Forest Rights Act which ensures the rights of the forest-dwelling tribal communities, a Sea Rights Act should be enacted which will give fishermen the rights which are due to them.

Though it stands cancelled, the EMCC contract controversy will have an impact on voters living in the coastal belts, he believes. Asked about the protection of their rights, most of the fishermen said they do not want promises which will not be kept. “We were praised by many as the heroes during the floods when we went to other districts to help people with our boats. But when it comes to key issues like EMCC, we did not see many people, especially activists, coming up with protests. When the Opposition raised the allegation, the government said they have not inked any contract with the multi-national firm,” said John Kurishinkal, a fisherman.

Kerala: Kochi fishermen seek government help in off-season

https://www.zee5.com/zee5news/kochi-fishermen-seek-government-help-in-off-season

"Several fishermen in Kochi said they are not happy with government policies and need help in the off-season. In a conversation with ANI, fisherman Abdul said, “It’s the off-season for fishing and we don’t have any catch. What can we sell and earn?” “The government is not providing us any fund or any kind of help so that we can subsist in the off-season. The government is saying that they are providing homes but we didn’t get anything. I filed my papers but got no response from the government,” he said.Another fisherman James crying for help and food said, “We don’t have food to eat. I have three children but I don’t have food to feed them. Due to off-season there is no catch and our earning only depends on fish catch but the government is not releasing any fund for us. We want help.”

Charles George, convener of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi said, “We are between devil and the deep sea, especially traditional fish workers. Recently central government brought out the blue economy framework document, but we are not happy with this. We asked the state government to counter these policies by the central govt.”We are facing fish drought. We ask the state government to give us fish farming relief package. We are asking govt to give us a

relief package and enough kerosene also. We ask the left government to give us our due rights. We are also against the treaty with an American company. Due to our protest, the treaty has been cancelled," said Charles George. "We want the government to release relief package given to us and govt should recognise our due right of ownership in fishing sector to fish workers. Modernisation is must. This is our demand from the government," he said.

Kerala: Plight of fishing community ignored

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/plight-of-fishing-community-ignored/articleshow/81538737.cms

"The last five years have not been easy for the coastal communities living in 59 constituencies in the state, especially those in the fishing sector. These people, numbering to around 10 lakh, belong to Hindu Dheevara, Latin Catholic and Muslim communities. Among them, around 7.5 lakh people live along the coast and the remaining reside in inland areas. They have been bearing the brunt of sea erosion and extreme weather events but their demand to the government to set its sights beyond subsidies have gone unheeded, they say. "Neither the state nor the Centre has done much for the community's overall development. On paper, there's talk of harbour development and modernization. Politicians play caste and religious politics with us and leave us divided during elections," said Antony Kurusunkal of the Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Union. "Fish drought, weather events leading to ban on fishing across the coasts followed by Covid and the economic slowdown, the rising kerosene and diesel costs have all affected our lives," said Charles George a member of the fisheries protection council that launched protests against the state government's deal with EMCC International for deep-sea fishing.Fishermen say both the central and state governments have been playing politics. "The kerosene subsidy was reduced to 25 litres per month from 128 litres for the past four years. Now, just last month, they have increased it again. It doesn't even last a month for the outboard engines in traditional boats. We still need to buy from the open market. None of the MLAs listen to us over our concerns about diesel prices, licence and registration fees, etc," said Kurusunkal. The Dheevara community has been seeking representatives from the coastal regions to represent them. "The minority communities (both Latin and Muslims) have their representatives, but often these are people who have no connection with the community and its problems. They are picked just because they represent their religions. Since we are split across the south, central and north zones, we are not a unified political force. Even the campaigning by candidates are not on local issues that have an impact on us," said Praveen V, chairman, Dheevara Trust.

Kerala: Seafood exporters seek measures to tide over crisis

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/seafood-exporters-seek-measures-to-tide-

over-crisis/article34086919.ece

"From the rising diesel price to shrinking supply of local raw materials for processing are hurting the seafood export industry in Kerala, which directly and indirectly employs thousands of people and earns around ?6,500 crore annually in exports. Another round of elections to the State Assembly is an opportunity to think of the negative and positive developments in the past that have affected the industry, the fortunes of which depend largely on wild catch now as well as imports from neighbouring States. The industry suffered major setbacks in the year of the COVID-19 pandemic during which operations came to a standstill, fishing harbours closed and movement of workers was totally banned. The labour strike at the Colombo port as well as scarcity of containers in the later half of 2020 further affected the fortunes of the seafood export industry. The COVID-19 lockdown in March last and subsequent restrictions saw fishing operations being curtailed extensively till the middle of August.

The shortage of raw materials forced some processors in Kerala to shift their operations to Andhra Pradesh. The industry now wants the government coming to power after the election to help it tide over problems such as the high price of diesel, which has made fishing expeditions too costly. This is a major problem facing the industry now, said Alex Ninan of Seafood Exporters' Association, Kerala. He said that the cost of diesel affected fishing activities and considerably reduced the availability of raw materials. He said that the government should look into the possibility of exploiting the thousands of hectares of water space available for aquaculture in the State. A rough estimate is that around 60,000 hectares are available and if the area can be utilised it will give a big boost to raw material availability. If areas that have been lying idle for 10 years or more can be pressed into aquaculture, it will make a big difference, he said.

Kerala: Biofloc, the tech-savvy way to farm fresh fish

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2021/mar/16/biofloc-the-tech-savvy-way-to-farm-fresh-fish-2276981.html

"At a time when jobs are disappearing as a result of the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, a new type of fish farming might be the solution that much needs. According to John Paul, chairman of PPJ Group, Biofloc fish farming is being adopted all over India. "The speciality is that you don't require a large space to set one up. A farmer can farm and harvest a large quantity of fish even on their terrace," he said. In other words, a space that can grow 200 fish using traditional methods can accommodate 2,000 using the new technique," he said. According to him, the base model of the tank has a diameter of one metre and a height of 1.20 metre. "The cost comes around Rs 28,000 to Rs 30,000. The tanks last more than five years," he said. According to John, the endeavour has been launched in association with a group of techies. "We provide the farmers with everything right from the tanks to the seedlings and feed.

All the farmers have to do is to look after the fish," said John. The entire project runs on a buy-back plan. "When the fish are ready, we harvest the tanks.

We manage the marketing too," he added. Biofloc fish farming will herald a revolution in this sector, said John whose company has already set up biofloc fish farms in Aluva and Palakkad. Apart from other benefits, this technique also implies that a farmer doesn't have to invest a lot to change the layout of his/her land. It is not a time-consuming affair and doesn't require constant care. If you want to change the location of the tanks? Just dismantle it and set it up somewhere else," he said. The first harvest is done five months from setting up of the tanks and the next one during the sixth month. According to John, the minimum base price set by the company for procuring the fish is Rs 175 per kg. "And for this, we will be opening 1,600 outlets. These outlets will be opened within a 10 km radius of the farms," he said, Another initiative is the supply of Kentucky-style fried fish, he added. "We will also be marketing valued-added fish products. Besides Kentucky style fried fish, which has been received well, we will also be launching mango fish," said John adding tilapia is the main fish variety that is farmed besides Assam vala and also pearl spot.

Kerala: Kumarakom fishers, tourism players struggle to stay afloat

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/mar/12/kumarakom-fishers-tourismplayers-struggle-to-stay-afloat-2275447.html

"At 2pm every day, Kumarakom native Rejimon starts preparing nets for fishing in the Vembanad lake. He leaves home to go fishing on his mechanised boat at 5pm and returns only by 7am next day. His routine hasn't changed. He works the same number of hours. What has changed is how much he gets in return."There were days when we got abundant catch, more than enough to manage our family. Those days are long gone. Now, we hardly catch fish worth Rs 400-Rs 600 daily. After expenses of fuel and net, there is hardly anything left," he says. Vembanad lake, India's largest, is a key tourist attraction and source of livelihood for thousands of fishermen families in Kumarakom and nearby panchayats. However, the dwindling fish wealth has plunged fishermen into crisis. There are 1,400 fishermen registered with the fisheries department at Kumarakom, Thiruvarppu and Arpukara panchayats in Kottayam district. Of them, less than 50 per cent fishers go fishing now. Most have left as the money is not good. For those still in it, the Inland Fishermen Welfare Service Cooperative Society is a big relief as it procures fish at a good price. However, president of the society K K Rajappan says inland fishermen are facing severe crisis and require government's support. "Fish production has come down drastically.

As per a study, Vembanad lake had around 172 species of fish before the Thanneermukkom regulator was constructed in 1975. Recent studies say there are only 52 species now," he says.

He blames the unscientific management of the regulator for this. The barrage remains closed from December 15 to March 15 to prevent entry of saline water and help paddy cultivation. “The regulator was constructed to aid in paddy cultivation, but it is happening just once a year mostly in Kuttanad and Upper Kuttanad. With the regulator closed, breeding of fish has been affected. Its closure also affects the tide, which is vital for the fish population,” he says. A fisherman for 60 years, Kunjumon says plastic waste in another headache. People are also using Kambam nets, which is an illegal practice. “The last time a cleaning drive was held, 10 truckloads of plastic waste were removed from the lake. The waste affects fish and destroys our net. Since the lake is linked with rivers in Kottayam, Alappuzha and Pathanamthitta, waste dumped there enters it. Even tourists throw plastic bottles in the water,” he says. Though tourism has had an impact on Vembanad lake, it also generated demand for fish in the local market. “With tourism down, fish prices have also reduced.

A major chunk of catch was usually purchased by hotels, resorts and homestay operators for their guests. Now, with no foreign tourists due to the pandemic, our supply depends on markets outside Kumarakom. Last year, an A Plus grade Kareemeen (pearl spot) fetched Rs 550 per kg. This year, it is in the Rs 400-Rs 450 per kg, due to low demand,” Rajappan said. With tourism hit due to Covid-19 travel curbs, the entire economy of Kumarakom has been affected. “Resorts and hotels were a major job provider to local residents. Now, several have lost jobs and now work as labours,” says Sathish, who runs a restaurant in Kumarakom.Jobin, who works with a resort in Kumarakom, says resorts get guests only on weekends, most of them from Ernakulam. “Almost all resorts have slashed their rents to attract tourists. But just a few come, that too on weekends . In the weekdays, resorts remain almost vacant,” he said.

Kerala: Deep sea fishing row: Latin Church slams govt officials for lapses

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-deep-sea-fishing-row-latin-church-slams-govt-officials-lapses-144815

"The Latin Church in Kerala has lashed out at the state government over the scrapped deal with US-based EMCC International for deep sea fishing and research, stating that the Fisheries and Industries Departments made serious mistakes and that they would have to take responsibility for the issue, instead of blaming bureaucrats. Bishop Joseph Kariyil of the Cochin Diocese said that he didn’t believe that the Chief Minister was kept in the loop and that the actions of departments concerned were condemnable. The bishop was speaking to the media after a meeting of the Kerala Regional Catholic Council (KRLCC) in Kochi on Sunday. ""The CM might have relied on the departments to act responsibly. However it was not for them to sign the pact without studying the issues properly,"" the bishop said, the Times of India reported. The controversy relates to two Memorandum of Understandings signed with EMCC International India, one by the Kerala Shipping Inland Navigation Corporation Limited

(KSINC) and one by the Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Limited (KSIDC). The one by KSIDC was signed in February 2020 while the one with KSINC was signed in February 2021.

The controversy over Kerala's deep sea fishing contract with US firm The EMCC International, according to the MoUs, will invest Rs 5,324 crore in fisheries research and development for upgrading and promoting the deep sea fishing industry in Kerala. The government cancelled the MoUs signed with KSINC after the opposition raised allegations of corruption in the deals and also highlighted the concerns of the fishing community, who have warned that foreign trawlers would impact fishermen and lead to unscientific deep fishing that could adversely affect the environment. ""The evidence in my possession or in the hands of opposition leader (Ramesh Chennithala) is a private matter and it's up to us to decide on when to bring it out. The deal was something that affects everyone, so why didn't (the government) furnish proof and clear their names, instead of kicking the ball to the opposition's court, demanding evidence from them,"" media reports quoted the bishop as saying. The KRLCC meanwhile passed a resolution, stating that it maintains its 'equal stance' and not back any particular political party or front for the upcoming Kerala Assembly polls, scheduled to be held on April 6.

Kerala: 90 percent fishermen not going to sea due to increase in diesel prices

https://updatefever.com/90-fishermen-not-going-to-sea-due-to-increase-in-diesel-prices/

"Hinesh, a local fisherman from Alleppey, says that we take our boat inside the sea for five to seven days. It costs one to one and a half lakh rupees. Due to the increase in the price of diesel, it has become difficult to carry it and nowadays fish are also coming down. "I have four factories here," says Premchandra Bhatt, managing Mangala Marine, one of Kerala's largest seafood exporter companies. More than 650 workers work, but 80% of the work has stalled since Corona. We were demanding a package from the government but did not get it.

Kerala: Fish species in Vembanad have declined by 40%: Study

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fish-species-in-vembanad-have-declined-by-40-study/article33992258.ece

"The fish species richness of Vembanad lake has fallen by 40 per cent since the construction of the Thanneermukkam barrage, concluded a group of researchers who assessed the post and pre-barrage period fish data of the water body. The fish diversity in the estuary is currently restricted to 90 species belonging to 17 orders and 48 families, which is 40 per cent lower that that of the 1980s. Most of the marine species that recorded prior to construction of the barrage has now disappeared. They have been replaced by freshwater and estuarine species, according to a group of researchers from the Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies

(KUFOS), Kochi. The research paper was jointly published by K. Roshni, C. R. Renjithkumar, Rajeev Raghavan, K. Ranjeet of the university. The barrage, which was constructed in the middle of the lake in 1975, has a length of 1,402 metre. It prevents seawater from entering the low-lying paddy fields in the southern part of the estuary, enabling double cropping of rice and ensuring drinking water to nearby areas. Every year, the barrage is closed for three months from mid December to mid March.

At times, the closure period will be extended up to May to prevent saline water intrusion. The unscientific management of the barrage over the past 45 years has hydrologically transformed the estuary into three distinct zones with distinct salinity regime and diverse physiography and hydrography, they noted. Fish sampling was carried out in each zone from June 2015 to May 2016, during monsoon, post-monsoon and pre-monsoon periods. Since the saline stretch of the estuary had been reduced considerably due to hydrological modifications, most migratory species are trapped near the barrage and caught in local fisheries, concluded the researchers. The researchers have suggested management interventions including allowing free movement of migratory fish by setting up fish passes during closure of the barrage. Though the restoration of the estuary to its original form will be impossible, management measures like periodic removal of silt, curbing the inflow of pollutants, restricting further developmental activities and continuous monitoring of the ecosystem could help revive and maintain the biodiversity and ecosystem services it supports, they suggested.

Kerala: International Women's Day: Two Kerala women to be honoured for successful ventures in fisheries sector

https://www.newindianexpress.com/good-news/2021/mar/07/international-womens-day-two-kerala-women-to-be-honoured-for-successful-ventures-in-fisheries-sect-2273451.html

"Raji George and Smija M B have all the reasons to cheer this International Women's Day. In a model for women empowerment, both of them showed their grit to become successful entrepreneurs in the fisheries sector. While Raji George from Angamali in Ernakulam district scripted the success story in integrated farming, Smija, an engineering diploma holder who hails from Moothakunnam, near Paravur in Ernakulam, chose cage fish farming as her profession. In recognition of their achievements, the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) will honour both the women entrepreneurs during the Women's Day celebration to be held at the institute on Monday. Raji started her entrepreneurial initiative by establishing a fish farm named 'Anna Aqua Farm' in a defunct quarry near Angamaly, after receiving training from the CMFRI and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra functioning under the institute. Apart from fish farming, she also runs 'Anna Agro Farm', an agricultural farm focusing on organic vegetable cultivation. In addition, she undertakes fodder cultivation, an incubator for chicks and a poultry farm which includes chicks, ducks and quails.

In as many as eight cages in a deep quarry of 60-feet depth, she farms fishes like gift tilapia, catla, catfish, rohu, mrigal and dam gold. Raji cultivates almost all types of vegetables on her agricultural farm avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Important crops on the farm include tomato, bhindi, cowpea, brinjal, chilli, carrot, ginger, turmeric, cauliflower, cabbage and tapioca. Her poultry farm has over 250 chicks including local breeds and around 300 quails. Maintaining a sustainable integrated farming system in the homestead plot of 75 cents, Raji George also rears cows and goats. She also finds time to empower the housewives of the locality in poultry farming through experience sharing and disseminating technical information based on her experience. She strategically utilises social media platforms to find a market for her produce and she made home deliveries too. Smija started her venture by establishing a cage fish farming unit in the Periyar with the technical guidance of the CMFRI. Gradually she expanded her farming into more cages by ensuring the participation of other women in her locality in the venture. Now, she is the leader of a self-help group named 'Periyar Activity Group'. Her leadership skill helped her popularize the cage farming technology in her entire locality and she made a huge impact in the area with many women forming self-help groups and launching cage fish farming. Her initiative helped many families in the locality to find a regular income through cage fish farming. Apart from her farming activities, she also focuses on providing training to a large number of women in her area inspiring them to become small-scale entrepreneurs in cage farming. CMFRI Director Dr A Gopalakrishnan will honour Raji George and Smija MB at the Women's Day celebration to be held by the Women Cell of the CMFRI. Actor Subi Suresh will be the chief guest at the function.

Kerala: Fishing boat drowns, five fishermen facing peril rescued

https://daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=807357

"After a fishing boat capsized due to strong waves, five fishermen were facing danger to their lives at deep sea. The incident happened near Bekal. The fishermen struggled for about two hours for survival. Personnel of the Coastal Security Force and fisheries department protection force rescued these fishermen. The incident happened at about 8 pm on Wednesday. The boat turned turtle about ten nautical miles away from Kasargod and broke into two. The fishermen who somehow got in a space in a corner of the boat, faced grave danger for their lives. After they got information, the staff of the Coastal Security Force rushed to the spot and rescued all the five fishermen. They were brought to the shore. The boat in question had left Nileshwar Ayithala two days back for fishing. The boat met tragedy when at deep sea. Those in the boat reportedly were from Thiruvananthapuram. They have been identified as Shyam (18), Jimmy (21), Kumar (43), Ishwar (58) and Dayi Rose (37). After they reached the seashore at Kasargod late night, they were admitted into the hospital for health check and preliminary treatment.

Kerala: Thoppumpady fishing harbour at standstill as talks fail

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/thoppumpady-fishing-harbour-at-standstill-as-talks-fail/article33984333.ece

"Operations at the Thoppumpady fisheries harbour will continue to be at a standstill with talks between trade unions on sharing of work at the harbour failed on Wednesday. The talks, convened by the district authorities on Wednesday, was inconclusive and will continue on Thursday, said a spokesman for Harbour Vyavasaya Samrakashana Samithi, a combination of harbour stakeholders that include traders and fish buyers as well as utility providers. The operations of the biggest fishing harbour in the State were suspended on Tuesday afternoon after workers belonging to various trade unions argued over work sharing even as dwindling fish catch has continued to shrink the harbour operations, said the samithi spokesperson. The seafood export in Kerala, worth around Rs.6,000 crore annually, depends to a great extent, on the operations of the Thoppumpady harbour. The seafood processing units both in the southern end of Ernakulam district and those in the northern end of Alappuzha district in Aroor and Chandiroor depend on supplies from the harbour for day-to-day activities.

The seafood processing units account for employment of around 5,000 people. The harbour is the base for operation of around 600 gillnet boats, 400 miscellaneous fishing boats and around 100 purseine boats. They employ fishers from Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The fishing boat is the lifeline of West Kochi as well as the fish processing units that support the seafood industry, said veteran trade union B. Hamsa of the Cochin Port Labour Union. The stakeholders have called for an immediate resolution of the dispute as it would help resume the harbour operations, which is central to the economic activities in the area. Financial losses The shortage of wild catch has reduced activities at the harbour, which suffered serious financial losses due to the lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic. The bad weather conditions in 2019 had also reduced the number of fishing days bringing much hardship to the more than 2,000 workers depending on the harbour operations.

Kerala: To launch online fish delivery portal

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/kerala-to-launch-online-fish-delivery-portal/article33942854.ece

"Fancies chances with nimbler private players Public sector Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation has launched Parivarthanam, to deliver seafood to the consumers' doorstep, and set up a dedicated portal. The initiative has been launched with a view to improving the socio-economic conditions of coastal communities by forging closer links with industry and enhancing the livelihood skills of the youth along the coastline, an official spokesman said. Sheik Pareeth, Managing Director of the Corporation, said Kerala has a long

tradition of processing seafood to Scandinavian quality, but its benefits have been denied to home consumers. 'We seek to change this scenario and redirect the processing technology towards the home market and establishing a quality supply chain to deliver fish to homes," said Roy Nagendran, Team leader. Boat owners keen A series of preliminary meetings have been held already with traditional fisher societies in Kollam and boat owners have expressed keen interest in participating with the initiative.

Parivarthanam will ensure that fish sourced either from catch or drawn live from the farms meets ICAR-CIFT (Central Institute of Fisheries Technology) standards. Every fish product and seafood unit will carry the quality stamp of CIFT, India's leading research centre in fishing and fish processing. Hi-tech supply chain High-tech surveillance systems will monitor the temperature of fish all through the supply chain till delivery, ensuring freshness and food safety. Producers in Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha will be made an integral part of this and encouraged to become entrepreneurs. The project also envisages a range of value-added products that include dry fish, pickles and marinated fish. Besides delivering fish to homes, Parivarthanam also focuses on skill development and job creation for college dropouts and Gulf returnees who lost their jobs from the pandemic. Preference will also be given to the kin of women fish vendors whose livelihoods are threatened by aggressive private players.

Kerala: Fishers up in arms against blue economy draft policy

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-up-in-arms-against-blue-economy-draft-policy/article33975181.ece

"Fishers in the State have risen as one against the draft policy framework on India's blue economy, which envisages using marine resources for sustainable development. Fishers' unions cutting across political divisions will meet here on Saturday to discuss the fallout of the policy framework, which contains "extremely dangerous recommendations" for the fisheries sector. The recommendations come close on the heels of a proposal for a national fisheries policy, which does not address the needs of traditional fishers, said Charles George of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi. He added that the policy favoured big capital, while it appeared to be balanced against local fishers, who eke out a living from traditional fishing. Fisheries experts and scientists as well as leaders of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation and National Fish Workers' Forum will participate in a national symposium on the issue.The new policy is favourable to capital-intensive enterprises, which will ultimately act against the interests of lakhs of fishermen," said Mr. George. Fishers' unions have called upon the government to empower traditional fishing communities to take up deep-sea fishing instead of allowing capital-intensive investments in diverse areas. Rumblings against the policy by fishers followed the loud protest against a major pact between a State government agency and a US company for building deep-sea trawlers. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Kerala State

Inland Navigation Corporation and the US company was withdrawn following protests by fishers' unions.

Kerala: No harbour yet between Aroor and Kayamkulam, fishers frown at govt

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/mar/03/no-harbour-yet-between-aroor-and-kayamkulam-fishers-frown-at-govt-2271284.html

"The sun starts peeping from the horizon. The rays filter through the clouds, painting the sky orange-red. All around, there is too much sound (some may even call it noise), of the roaring sea and the rumbling engines of fishing boats. Yet, none can match the sound of the auctioneer yelling.Another day has dawned on Arthunkal, a harbour sans facilities in Cherthala. Country boats carrying the day's haul have arrived at the beach and the catch is being taken to the selling point amid the rush of auctioneers and fisherwomen. It may all seem good. Yet, a look at the faces of the fishermen would reveal it isn't. Some are lucky to get a catch. Most are concerned, mainly due to the depleting marine resources and lockdown blues. However, their biggest problem is the delay in completing the Arthunkal harbour."Work began here 22 years ago. K C Venugopal, the former Alappuzha MP, brought a Rs 100-crore project which got delayed due to 'red-tape'. Ponnani harbour work was over in four years, but here it is progressing at a snail's pace," says Raju Asrayam, the Alappuzha district president of Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. "We have three powerful ministers in the cabinet. None of them care about us," he laments. The fishermen in Alappuzha blame both LDF as well as UDF for their plight. "Civil Supplies Minister P Thilothaman represents Cherthala. However, he doesn't think about us.

There are no fishing harbours on the 80-km stretch from Kayamkulam to Aroor and fishermen here have to travel to Vypeen and Chellanam in Ernakulam to set out to the sea on their boats. The sea is turbulent early in the morning and we cannot set out while fighting the waves. So, we hire a truck to Ernakulam and have to cough up Rs 3,500 per day for transportation alone," says Jerome Bernard, a fisherman. At the same time, they are grateful for some steps taken by Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma to regulate the auctioning of fish. "The commission has been limited to five per cent and the price is fixed based on the species and weight of the fish. Regulations on boat building and fixing the minimum legal size of the fish are positive steps. However, there are five fish meal factories in Kerala that buy juvenile fish. Such ventures should be discouraged," says Shaji Kurisingal, another fisherman. Traditional fishermen complain that though trawl boats are allowed to catch fish only beyond 12 nautical miles off the

coast, they cast their nets close to the shore at night. Several species of fish have disappeared from the state's coastline due to over-fishing. Though the government has fixed the mesh size for trawl nets, Matsyafed, itself a government enterprise, provides nets with smaller mesh.

The frequent weather warnings by the IMD, which lead to loss of several work days, are another complaint the fishermen have. "Due to such warnings and Covid curbs, we could not venture into the sea even for 100 days last year," says Raju. He says the Human Rights Commission had directed that the fishermen be paid Rs 600 for every work day lost. "We have not received any compensation," says Raju. On the Arthunkal harbour, the fishermen believe there are political reasons behind the delay.Finance Minister Thomas Isaac sanctioned another harbour at Chethi, just six km away. The government could have completed the Arthungal harbour instead," says Jerome. The fishermen feel J Mercykutty Amma is a better Fisheries minister than her predecessors. However, the deep-sea fishing deal (now-cancelled) has not gone down well with them. They also want fuel subsidy. "We are shelling out Rs 82 per litre for kerosene which has hiked operation costs," says Kunjumon, a fisherman.

Kerala: Portal to aid in boosting fishermen's livelihood

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/portal-to-aid-in-boosting-fishermens-livelihood/articleshow/81248978.cms

"Parivarthanam project is aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of coastal communities Thiruvananthapuram: Parivarthanam, an initiative of the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) to supply fresh fishes at the doorsteps of consumers, has launched its portal. The website, www.parivarthanam.org will provide information about KSCADC's multi-pronged strategies for coastal communities through quality fish supply and marketing; promotion of green energy; and building bridges with industry. It will also help jobless youth in securing gainful employment and help them eliminate skill gaps. The project is aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of coastal communities by forging closer links with industry and enhance the livelihood skills of the youths along the coastline. "The portal's launch is a step towards streamlining our efforts to improve the quality of life of our coastal communities, empower youngsters through skill development and contribute to an appreciable reduction of our carbon footprint," KSCADC managing director Sheik Pareeth said.

Parivarthanam ensures that the fish is iced in boxes upon capture at sea, closed and transported swiftly on landing to processing centers. It will also provide traceability ensuring the end-consumers are fully aware of the sources and origins of the fish, time of capture and details of fishers involved. ""Kerala has a long tradition of processing seafood to quality standards of Scandinavian countries but this facility was not available for home consumers. Parivarthanam seeks to redirect this processing technology towards home markets and establish a high-quality

supply chain to deliver fish to homes," team leader of Parivarthanam, Roy Nagendran said. The initiative is expected to be a boost for the fisheries sector that has been reeling from poor harvests, migration of popular species, extreme weather conditions, and excessive fishing pressure even before the onset of Covid19, which brought in its wake a growing fear of contamination from wet markets. Parivarthanam will ensure that all the fishes, sourced either from capture or live from the farms, will have to abide by Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR-CIFT) standards. Every fish product as well as all seafood units of Parivarthanam will carry the quality stamp of CIFT, the country's leading research centre in fishing and fish processing. High tech surveillance systems will monitor the temperature of the fishes all through the supply chain till delivery, ensuring freshness and food safety. Parivarthanam is also reaching out to all fish producers in Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts, making them an integral part of the supply chain and encouraging them to become entrepreneurs.

Kerala: Talks needed on Blue Economy policy

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/talks-needed-on-blue-economy-policy/article33951984.ece

"The Coastal Agency for Development and Liberation (CADAL), an initiative of Kerala Region Latin Catholic Council, has urged the Centre to place the draft policy on Blue Economy (sustainable use of ocean resources), for wider consultations. In a letter addressed to the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, the organisation said the policy would have many implications on the marine communities and marine ecology. "The draft needs to be discussed with the people/ fishers and fishing communities who will have to undergo untold miseries by way of coastal erosion, fish resource depletion and drastic ecological disasters in the sea and the sea coast. It will affect the life, livelihood and the very existence of fishing communities in the country," it said, requesting that the policy be put on hold for some time to enable discussions once the scourge of the pandemic was over. In a press release, the agency said that the draft policy was published on February 17 and the last date for giving opinions was February 27, which it said was too short a period to discuss something with far-reaching consequences as this.

Kerala: Coastal areas in Kollam see protest marches

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/coastal-areas-in-kollam-see-protest-marches/article33952887.ece

"A day long hartal called by various organisations over the ongoing controversy regarding a deep-sea fishing contract between the Left Democratic Front government and a U.S.-based company evoked mixed reaction in the coastal areas of Kerala on Saturday. While

the coastal hartal called by various pro-Congress organisations did not affect the traditional sector with most of the boats venturing into the sea, vessels from the mechanised sector stayed off the waters. Though the coastal areas witnessed a spate of protest marches and meetings, no cases of violence were reported. “The hartal was a total failure as the fishers went ahead with their routine trips and came back with the day’s catch at nearly all fish landing centres. Around 168 boats from Kollam ventured into the sea at midnight and other 75 boats went on their fishing trips this morning. Apart from a minor clash related to sales there was no issue and everything went as usual and even fish vending was not affected,” said Kollam district Matsya Thozhilali Union (CITU) president H.Basil Lal. According to some fishers, the fall in the number of boats was mainly due to the annual lean season not hartal. “If it was the season, more boats would have gone.

Most boats that stayed off are not venturing out regularly nowadays due to a dip in catch. Also, we think this hartal is not for fishers as it has a clear political motive,” says Ambrose, fisher. Meanwhile, the mechanised sector participated in the hartal with the majority of trawlers staying in the harbours. “We participated in the hartal due to multiple problems other than the alleged deep-sea fishing deal between the State government and the U.S. firm. There are many issues in the sector, including the hike in fuel price, that require immediate redressal. Though we are an independent association with no particular political allegiance, we considered it an opportunity to mark our protest,” says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association. Resignation soughtThe Fisheries Minister has tried to deceive fishers and she should resign. We also want a judicial probe into the entire episode and we will launch more severe agitations in coming days,” said said Biju Lukose, district president of the Matsyathozhilali Congress.

Kerala: Govt to provide deep-sea fishing vessels to 10 fishermen societies

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/feb/27/kerala-govt-to-provide-deep-seafishing-vessels-to-10-fishermen-societies-2269531.html

"The state government had decided to provide longliner boats (deep-sea fishing vessels) to 10 fishermen societies. This is the first phase of a programme to equip the traditional fishermen in scientific fishing, said Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma.Built by Cochin Shipyard, each boat will cost Rs 1.63 crore. While the Centre and state will jointly provide a subsidy of Rs 48 lakh per boat, the rest will be made available as bank loan. The minister said the programme aims at a phased conversion from unsafe fishing on traditional boats to safe and mechanised fishing. The sea will not be disturbed as the catch is collected using fishing hooks and gill netting, she added. State will also supply kerosene to fishermen at Rs 25 a litre from March. The boats will be given to groups of fishermen who are members of fishermen primary cooperatives. The boats will be handed over in eight months.

The programme is a joint initiative of the state fisheries department and Matsyafed. The minister said the work of 20 houses for fisherfolk at Beemapally was complete. The Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies will start two centres at Kollam and Payyannur. They will be upgraded as colleges in future.

Kerala: State fishing policy favours fishers: CM

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/states-fishing-policy-favours-fishers-cm/article33915059.ece

"The Kerala government has a clear stand on deep-sea fishing favouring fishers and that will not be changed, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said. Inaugurating a mechanical workshop, store and mobile crane shelter at the Kollam port through videoconferencing on Tuesday, he said the newly added facilities would be beneficial to the overall development of the fisheries sector in the district. The Rs.3.90- crore project at the Kollam port was completed by the Kerala Maritime Board. “Instead of going after baseless allegations, the government had been focusing on development,” he said. The Chief Minister also inaugurated the permanent electronic data interface system and land acquisition in Beypore, a maritime training hall in Alappuzha and the crew change terminal at Vizhinjam. To aid cashew sector Ports Minister Kadannappally Ramachandran, who presided over the function, pointed out that port development would be very advantageous to the cashew sector in Kollam.

The Minister also inaugurated the official website of the Kerala Maritime Board and unveiled the plaque of the new building. ‘‘Development works to the tune of Rs.30 crore have been implemented in the Kollam port in the past five years and the government has been trying to explore all possibilities of the port,” said Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma, who delivered the keynote address. Emigration clearance She added that the State would pressurise the Centre to establish a system for emigration clearance to utilise the full potential of the port. “Steps will be taken to solve the disputes in opening the maritime institute,” she said. The Minister also released the official tagline of the Kerala Maritime Board — Sadhyathakalude Munambu (Cape of opportunities) — created by Neendakara port conservator Binulal. M. Mukesh, MLA, Kerala Maritime Board chairman V.J. Mathew, Chief Executive Officer T.P. Salim Kumar and member V. Manilal were present.

Kerala: Fishers at sea over Kerala government’s deal move

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/feb/22/fishers-at-sea-over-kerala-governments-deal-move-2267107.html

"The fisher communities in the state feel betrayed by the state government for allowing a huge investment by a private company to operate ships and manage facilities at the expense of the livelihood of over a million people. The controversy over the MoU signed for deep-sea

fishing between Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) and US-based EMCC International has come as a rude shock to them because the government has not given permit to any vessels in the past five years as part of its stated policy to protect the livelihood of the local fisher community. Besides, the state's fishing policy offered support to the local community for deep-sea fishing. Even the state's budget presented on January 15 earmarked Rs 25 crore for helping the fishermen buy 100 deepsea vessels at a subsidised rate. "We get a feeling that the state government also supports corporate investment in fishing sector. It goes in line with the national policy," said Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF) state president Jackson Pollayil. The fishermen have reasons to be aggrieved, because if the government goes ahead with the Rs 5,000-crore project, 400 new vessels will be added to the already crowded sea front. In the absence of a national law, the sea beyond 12 nautical miles is a free-for-all location where catamarans compete with trawlers to get a share of the dwindling catch. While the regional trawl boat operators are worried about the competition in the deep sea, the traditional fishermen are suspicious about deal.

"The deal has a mention of five mother vessels meant for fish processing. We doubt that it would help in shallow water fishing," said Jackson. The concerns raised by the fishermen could be far fetched as the project is in a nascent stage. However, they are apprehensive because of the government's initial reaction. "The minister was evasive when we approached her even before it became a controversy," said the leader. According to him, it is difficult to comprehend that the minister was unaware of the development. Experts in the sector said the deal was controversial on many aspects. "The Meenakumari Committee's report (2015) on deep-sea fishing said the stock is depleting. So adding more vessels would not make any business sense. The new company would find it difficult to get skilled workers as those engaged in the work have vessels under their ownership. It needs to be probed how KSINC got involved in the project without ascertaining the ground realities and the stated government policy," said A J Vijayan, an activist and an expert in the sector. The issue is likely to be a headache for the ruling LDF ahead of the elections if it fails to take the community into confidence. Protests ahead Feb 22: A replica of fishing vessel on Alappuzha beach to be burnt by KSMTF, march to the office of KSINC in Kochi by Fisheries Coordination Committee. Feb 24: A copy of agreement with EMCC to be burnt in Kochi. Feb 27: Coastal hartal by joint protest committee involving boat owners, traditional fishermen and fish workers. March: Protest march to the Secretariat.

Kerala: The Kerala government annuls agreement with U.S. firm

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-govt-annuls-agreement-with-us-firm/article33907162.ece

"The Kerala government has invalidated the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation's (KSINC) controversial agreement with a U.S.-based firm, EMCC International, to build and operate a deep-sea trawling fleet to harvest the marine wealth off the coast of Kerala. In one stroke, the government has also attempted to stymie the Opposition's political gambit to stir up resentment against the ruling front for entertaining an investment proposal that seemed at odds with the vast coastal community's inalienable right to harvest their traditional fishing grounds exclusively. KSINC managing director N. Prasanth and Shiju Varghese recently inked the Rs.2,950 crore pact to build 400 deep sea fishing trawlers and new harbours and for the port development activities. The government found the agreement contravened the Left Democratic Front's policy to allow only traditional fishers to own or operate deep-sea trawlers. Only they would receive new boat permits. Govt. stand The government felt the KSINC had "missed" the critical proviso when inking the agreement. The KSINC "failed" to vet the firm before inking the memorandum of understanding. The company "lacked" the financial heft to build a vast fleet and allied infrastructure. Its seed money was less than Rs.10 lakh, an official said.

The Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) also appeared taken in by the firm's pitch to build modern fishing harbours and a marine product processing centre. Consequently, it agreed to allocate four acres for the firm in an industrial park in Alappuzha. The government found the firm had attempted to take advantage of its programme to modernise the State's ageing fishing fleet incrementally. Home Secretary T.K. Jose is examining the sequence of events that led to the signing of the agreements. Leader of the Opposition Ramesh Chennithala said shifting blame to officials would not help the political executive. The government could not absolve itself of the guilt of sacrificing traditional fishers at the altar of private business. The motive for engaging the U.S. firm remained suspect, he said. Congress workers led by T.N. Pratapan, MP, protested in front of the KSINC office in Kochi. EMCC International India Private Limited president Shiju Varghese came out against the cancellation of the agreement. "On what basis is the government cancelling the MoU? We are not any monopoly who are coming to plunder the fish stock of the State. Why did the Fisheries Minister not tell us prior if the project is against the State's Fisheries' Policy?"" he told a television channel.

Kerala: After a long wait, Chellanam gets a modern fishing harbor

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/after-a-long-wait-chellanam-gets-a-modern-fishing-harbour/article33908452.ece

"The dream of a fishing harbour for traditional fishermen living along the 26-km coastal line between South Chellanam and Fort Kochi as well as those in the coastal villages of Arthunkal, Ottamassery, and Andhakaranazhi was realised on Monday with the inauguration of the Chellanam fishing harbour. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the harbour, the demand for which had been rife for nearly a decade. P.A. Charles, a traditional fisherman and one among those who gave up their homes and land for the project, said that the opening of the harbour gave hope to the village. Around 200 traditional fishing vessels berth at the harbour now. Sanction for the construction of a 120-metre-long breakwater for the harbour was accorded in 2007. A total of Rs.5 crore was allocated for the project initially. The Harbour Engineering Department later submitted a proposal for transforming the facility into a full-fledged fishing harbour. However, the project was delayed due to difficulties in land acquisition. The new harbour has facilities, including approach roads as well as a wharf and auction halls. A communication from the Public Relations Department said that the harbour would provide direct employment to 9,000 persons while generating 13,000 indirect jobs. The facility was constructed at a cost of Rs.50 crore. Fishers from Chellanam, Maruvakkad, Kandakkadavu, Kannamali, and Cheriyakadavu will immediately benefit from the project. Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma presided over the inaugural function, while John Fernandez and K.J. Maxi, MLAs, graced the occasion.

Kerala: Renovated Vellayil harbour thrown open to fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/renovated-vellayil-harbour-thrown-open-to-fishers/article33909293.ece

"Offering new opportunities for coastal people, the renovated Vellayil harbour was thrown open to fishermen on Monday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan commissioned the Rs. 75-crore project which was completed using State and Central funds after years-long wait. In his online inaugural address, Mr. Vijayan said the new fishing harbour, which was earlier a fish landing centre, would create 10,000 more direct employment opportunities for fishers and allied workers in Kozhikode district. This would be apart from about one lakh indirect employment opportunities for people associated with the field, he said. He said an additional 600 tonnes of daily catch would reach the market through the new harbour. “We hope that it will come to the benefit of fishermen and allied workers from Vellayil, Puthiyakadavu, Thoppayil and Kamburam areas,” he added. Harbour projects Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma said the State government completed eight fishing harbours within five years by extending their direct benefits to thousands of fishers in Kerala. “In Kozhikode district alone, we opened two harbours. As of now, 21 fishing harbours are there to explore the scope

of fishing," she said. The Minister said the fund allotted by the Centre for the development of the Rs. 75-crore Vellayil harbour project was just Rs. 17 crore.

"The promise made earlier was the allocation of about 75% of the total fund by the Union government," she said. It was in 2012 that the proposal for the development of the fish landing centre was given sanction. Though the expected time of completion then was 2017, works were delayed because of shortage of funds and delayed tendering procedures. Technical issues related to the reconstruction of breakwaters also hit the project. Facilities Fisheries Department officials said the harbour renovation work was completed by ensuring all basic facilities such as safe wharf, auction hall, loading area, parking space, administrative block, improved electrification, hygienic drain, and compound wall. Earlier, it was just a fish landing centre which was heavily dependent on the nearby Puthiyappa harbour, they said. According to officials, the opening of the new harbour within the city limits would also reduce the rush at the Puthiyappa harbour to a great extent. Based on the daily income generated from the facility, more facilities for storage, processing, and packing would be considered at the harbour, they said.

Kerala: Floods affected fish population in Aralam rivers, finds study

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/floods-affected-fish-population-in-aralam-rivers-finds-study/article33898100.ece

"A survey on the freshwater fishes in the rivers flowing through the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary has found that the floods in the previous years had a drastic impact on a few species of fish, which were found in abundance here earlier. The two-day survey was conducted as part of the wildlife survey, organised jointly by the Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary and Malabar Nature History Society and carried out by students, environmentalists, and led by Jaffer Palot, scientist, Zoological Survey of India, and C.P. Shaji, fish biologist. The study, which focussed on the Urutty and Cheenkani rivers flowing through the sanctuary, found that there had been a drastic reduction of fishes including loaches, Malabar Spiny eel and Travancore Batasio in the rivers, Mr. Shaji told The Hindu. He said the first survey in the sanctuary was conducted in 1995 and later in 2019. While both the surveys had found that the rivers were teeming with loaches, this time they could find only two or three fish of the species, indicating a drastic reduction in their population.

It was concluded that the such a drastic fall in the population had occurred due to the floods, which changed the river beds. However, compared with the previous surveys, three more varieties of fish were found in the river, which took the tally of fishes found in the rivers here to 48, Mr. Shaji said. While during the 2019 survey, only 32 species of fish were found, this increased to 45 species in 2019 and to 48 species this year. The Malabar Sucker Cat fish, which is endemic to the Western Ghats and was found in 2010 by the Zoological Survey of India, was

sighted here during this survey, he said. The other species of fish, including Malabar Barl, Flamentous Barl, Malabar Dino, and Malabar Killu have maintained their population levels and were found in abundance. Overfishing Most of the fish varieties are edible but no socio-economic survey had been done here to understand whether overfishing was another reason for the reduction of fish varieties here, he said.

Kerala: The controversy over deep sea fishing contract with US firm

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/controversy-over-kerala-s-deep-sea-fishing-contract-us-firm-143906

"On February 19, Friday, Opposition Leader Ramesh Chennithala called out the Pinarayi Vijayan-led government in Kerala for entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a US-based company for deep sea fishing in the state. However, Minister Mercykutty Amma said that the Fisheries Ministry, which is in charge of giving license for deep sea trawling, has not signed any MoU with EMCC International India. Though the fisheries department may not have signed an MoU, two were signed between government public undertakings and EMCC. Documents accessed by TNM showed that the first MoU was signed between Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Limited or KSIDC (for the government of Kerala) and EMCC in February 2020. Another MoU was signed between Kerala Shipping Inland Navigation Corporation Limited (KSINC) and the firm in February 2021.According to the MoUs, EMCC International India will invest Rs 5,324 crore in fisheries research and development for upgrading and promoting the deep sea fishing industry in Kerala.

The company will build 400 ships and five mother vessels at Rs 2 crore and Rs 74 crore each respectively. Accusing the Kerala government of engaging in large-scale corruption, Ramesh Chennithala pointed out that fishermen and political parties, including the CPI(M), have opposed foreign deep sea trawlers on the Kerala coast in the past. According to the Opposition, the move to allow foreign trawlers will impact the fishermen and lead to unscientific deep fishing. The state Cabinet approved the draft fisheries policies in 2019, which protects deep-sea fishing from local and foreign trawlers, in addition to improving scientific methods of fishing and allowing fishermen to fix the price of the catch and sell it in the market. The opposition has said that these MoUs will go against the spirit of the fisheries policy. How the project came about In 2018, EMCC claimed to have met Kerala Fisheries, Harbour Engineering, and Cashew Industry Minister J Mercykutty Amma in New York and discussed the project "Fisheries Research and Development for the Up-gradation and Promotion of Deep-Sea Fishing Industry in Kerala, India."

On August 2, 2019, the EMCC said it submitted its concept note (summary of proposal) for the project to KR Jyothilal IAS Principal Secretary at the Department of Fisheries, Harbour Engineering, and Cashew Industry, requesting a letter of intent (initial proposal for a project)

from the Kerala government. On February 28, 2020, the EMCC signed an MoU with the Kerala government on "Fisheries Research and Development for the Up-gradation and Promotion of Deep-Sea Fishing Industry in Kerala, India" at ASCEND2020-Kerala global investors meet in the state. According to this MoU, the government of Kerala will assist EMCC to invest Rs 5,000 crore in the state for "Fisheries Research and Development." On October 30, 2020, EMCC submitted a request for land allotment in Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation (KSIDC) Mega Food Park at Pallipuram in Ernakulam for setting up a seafood processing centre. On February 2, 2021, EMCC signed an MoU with Kerala Shipping Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) to build 400 ships and five mother vessels.

On February 3, 2021, EMCC received a letter from KSIDC, stating the allotment of 4 acres of land to set up a seafood processing unit. On February 11, 2021, EMCC sent a letter to Kerala Industrial Minister EP Jayarajan, requesting Cabinet Approval for the project. What the firm proposes In the letter to Industrial Minister EP Jayarajan, the US firm said that the proposal was based on Clause 2.9 of the Kerala government's Fisheries Policy 2018. It says that "to reduce the stress on overfishing in Continental Shift area, deep-sea fishing vessels will be encouraged to move to Continental Slope area." A coastal nation has control over its resources within a continental shelf, which extends from the coastline of a continent to a point called a shelf break. Beyond this, the shelf descends towards the deep ocean floor called the continental slope. Clause 2.2 in the same policy, however, asserts that "pressure will be put on the central government to stop local and foreign trawlers from doing deep-sea fishing to preserve the marine wealth."

The company said that the project will provide jobs for 23,000 people in various categories in the project, logistics and merchandising resources, quality assurance professionals, researchers and scientists, technologists and marketers. It also said that approximately 16,000 fishermen will be trained and deployed across 40 pilot prototype vessels and 1,500 men and women will be trained and employed in 200 plus processing and retail outlets to be launched across the state. Although the MoU makes no mention of the funding, the concept note said, "The project funding will be based on the BOOT (Build, Own, Operate and Transfer) system, and US-based EMCC Global Consortium through its Indian subsidiary EMCC International India shall be the source and guarantor of the funding." Kerala government denies signing MoU Alleging that it was a corrupt deal, Chennithala appealed to the Pinarayi Vijayan government not to proceed with the project, saying it will adversely affect lakhs of fishermen.

"There is a shortage of fish in the sea. How can the government come into an agreement with an American company for deep-sea fishing? This is against the interest of fishermen. This is corrupt and a high-level committee should probe the matter," he said. On the same day, responding to questions from reporters on Chennithala's charges, Mercykutty Amma called the allegations baseless and with no merit. "The Opposition leader is speaking of an imaginary

contract. No agreement has been signed by the government to allow fishing by the US firm," she said. Releasing a letter from EMCC, Chennithala had also alleged that Minister Mercykutty Amma had met the EMCC officials. On February 20, Saturday, Chennithala also released a picture that purportedly showed EMCC officials meeting Mercykutty Amma at her office. On Saturday, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan stated that neither the state government nor any of its departments have signed an MoU in this regard. "It is normal for public sector undertakings like the KSINC to sign MoUs in any conferences or investment meets. It would come for the consideration of the government only later. A policy decision in this regard would be taken only then," Pinarayi Vijayan said. Chennithala alleged that the Chief Minister is not revealing the conditions of the deep-sea fishing contract. Incidentally, in an interview to a television channel on February 20, Saturday evening, EMCC president Shibu said, "As the project is not in compliance with the Kerala fishing policy, they have decided not to invest Rs 5,000 crore in the fisheries research and development, but will go ahead with a Rs 100 crore project in the seafood processing unit (in Ernakulam)."

Kerala: Fishermen to intensify protests

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kerala-fishermen-to-intensify-protests/articleshow/81132627.cms

"In a show of strength, traditional fishermen unions and boat owners associations joined hands with people's representatives to take their battle against the government decision on the signing of MoU with an American company for the fisheries sector. They formed an umbrella forum, Matsya Mekhela Samrakshana Samithi, to spearhead the agitations next week which will culminate in a coastal hartal on Feb 27. "On Monday, we will stage a protest in front of the KSINC (Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation) office in Kochi and march to the fisheries minister's residence at Thiruvananthapuram," said Charles George, general convenor of the Samithi. MPs Hibi Eden, and T N Prathapan were also present at a meeting held in Kochi on Saturday to discuss the issue. Fishermen unions have in the last few weeks raised objections against the MoU signed between an American company 'EMCC International' and KSINC for a Rs 2950 Cr project for the fishing sector.

The project will include building 400 deep-sea fishing trawlers and port development activities in Kerala. Currently, foreign trawlers are more in use in the state making it one of the largest foreign investments in the state. Meanwhile, KSINC in an official statement termed the controversy as regrettable. "As a commercial entity in the shipping industry, we bag construction orders just like any builder or Shipyard does. Our company has an untarnished reputation as a trustworthy vessel builder and is a fast-growing company in the maritime sector. KSINC is not a fishing company and we are interested only in furthering our business in the manufacturing and maritime side. The clients can operate the constructed ships/vessels only

based on the law, license and regulations laid down by the state/central governments for which they have to go through a procedure laid down. The client is yet to remit the advance or detailed drawings or their plans. The current discussions are premature and based on a wrong understanding of the role of KSINC. It is requested that unwanted controversy be kindly avoided by all concerned," the statement said. The Centre had withdrawn the Meenakumari Committee report on deep sea fishing following widespread protests from the fishing community. The state had objected with foreign vessels permission suggested in the report and now it has taken such a decision, the Samithi said.

Kerala: Fishing hartal on State's coastline on Feb. 27

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishing-hartal-on-states-coastline-on-feb-27/article33891667.ece

"A fishing hartal will be observed on Kerala's coastline on February 27 under the banner of the newly formed Matsya Mekhala Samrakshana Samiti, demanding cancellation of the ''Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)'' between the Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) and a U.S.-based company to build 400 trawlers to be deployed off the Indian coast for deep-sea fishing. The decision on the hartal was taken here on Saturday evening following a meeting of fishers' unions (barring those affiliated to the CPI(M), CPI, and the BJP), boat owners' associations, representatives of traditional fishermen, and people's representatives led by Hibi Eden and T.N. Pratapan, MPs. KSINC office siege Prior to the hartal, fishers will lay siege to the KSINC head office here and take out a march to the residence of Minister for Fisheries J. Mercykutty Amma in Kollam on February 22. It will be followed by a regional convention of traditional fishers in Kochi and Kozhikode at 4 p.m. on February 25. "It is imperative that the State government cancel the MoU inked with the US firm to roll out 400 trawlers, since it will lead to massive depletion of marine resources, affecting the livelihood of lakhs of people.

It was agreed on Saturday to adopt an apolitical approach in opposing the government's plans that will derail the State's fisheries sector," Mr. Pratapan said. Fisheries stakeholders, including scientists and researchers, had recently demanded cancellation of the MoU, saying that the State government had not done proper homework on the issue. Meanwhile, Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal was elected as chairman of the Matsya Mekhala Samrakshana Samiti and K.K. Radhakarishnan and Ummer Ootummal as its working chairmen. Charles George will be the convener, while the organisation will have three MPs — N.K. Premachandran, T.N. Pratapan, and Hibi Eden — as well as V. Dinakaran, former MLA, and Father Eugine Pereira as patrons

Kerala: Cheap imports hits inland fish farmers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/cheap-imports-hits-inland-fish-farmers/article33889003.ece

"Tilapia, one of the most farmed fish varieties in Kerala, used to fetch around Rs.250 in the market until recently. But the inflow from other States has caused the price to plummet, adversely impacting the aquaculture sector and inland farmers of Kerala. The fish is now available at Rs.110 and the aqua farmers say there is no market for their produce due to imports, especially from Andhra Pradesh. "The production potential of freshwater culture has escalated since Subhiksha Keralam, but nearly 1,000 tonnes of fish reach Kerala every day from other States. This low-quality formalin-laced fish can be bought at a cheap price, but it can lead to multiple health issues. Government should take steps to ensure that the stock reaching Kerala is chemical-free and seize consignments that are contaminated," says T.Prushothaman, State president, Kerala Aqua Farmers Federation. The federation has already approached the authorities for remedial measures that also include provision for processing surplus fish and make ready-to-eat products.

"Right now farmers are forced to sell fish at a rate that doesn't even cover the production cost," he adds. Kerala, with its ever-soaring demand, is a major market for the vast fish farms in Andhra Pradesh since their local consumption is not very high.Despite our marine wealth and inland fish production, around 2 lakh MT fish arrived in Kerala from other States during the last year and it has been affecting our market," says P.A.Lalson, State secretary, All Kerala Aquaculture Promoters Union. He adds that though the government has implemented several projects to promote aquaculture and accelerate inland production, there is no proper marketing network. "Since the launch of Matsya Keralam project more than a decade back, the State has taken measures to maximize the annual production of freshwater fish. But our fish consumption is very high and we are dependent on other States. But right now these lobbies have complete monopoly over many markets in Kerala and everyday consignments from Andhra Pradesh arrive in Ernakulam with tilapia, pangasius, seabass and a variety of marine fish." Huge volumes of low-quality pearl spot flooding the market is another issue faced by the farmers. "In many parts of Kerala they sell pearl spot that tastes nothing like the real fish. It looks very similar to the original, but the flesh will be totally tasteless and most of the times the stock will be very old. Buyers usually go for low-priced fish thinking it's the same," says Rajeevan, a farmer from Alappuzha. In raids conducted by Fisheries and Food Safety Departments following lockdown, several trucks carrying huge quantities of stale fish were seized. "But they stopped the raids after sometime and now a good portion of the fish reaching our market is not fit for human consumption," he adds.

Kerala: Narrow escape for 3 fishers as boat capsizes

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/narrow-escape-for-3-fishers-as-boat-

capsizes/article33874281.ece

"Three fishermen from Chaliyam had a narrow escape when their fibre boat capsized off the Parappanangadi coast on Thursday. Fisheries Department sources said that the incident occurred after an unidentified fishing boat hit the fibre boat, 13 nautical miles off the coast. The fishermen, P.K. Ashraf, P.K. Yusef, and Hareesh Chaliyappadam, were rescued nearly three hours after the incident. The fishermen said they were spotted by a group of fishermen from Tamil Nadu. Till their arrival, the three men were floating in the sea by holding on to the damaged boat. None of them suffered serious injuries. The coastal police said they were yet to get any clue about the larger boat which had hit the fibre boat and sped away without trying to rescue the occupants.The damaged boat and costly fishing nets were also lost in the incident," they said. Based on the statement of the fishers, the police said it was likely not a purposeful attempt to endanger the boat. The rope, which was used to tie the fishing net with the fibre boat, reportedly got trapped under the larger fishing boat. This caused the boat to drift towards the fibre boat and hit it.

Kerala: 4 fish markets in Kollam to be revamped

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/4-fish-markets-in-kollam-to-be-revamped/article33866505.ece

"The Fisheries Department will renovate four markets in the district by including them in the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board project, said Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma on Wednesday. Anchal, Kottarakara, Punalur, and Pathanapuram markets will be renovated at Rs. 15.3 crore. The markets will have retail outlets, butcher stalls, cold storage, cleaning room and loading facility. Stalls will have steel display tables and sinks. Freezer, waste treatment plant and drainage are other amenities.

Kerala: Fisheries stakeholders call for scrapping trawler project

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fisheries-stakeholders-call-for-scrapping-trawler-project/article33865466.ece

"Fisheries stakeholders, ranging from scientists and researchers to owners of fishing boats, have appealed for calling off a memorandum of understanding between the government agency Kerala State Inland Navigation Corporation and a U.S.-based company to build 400 trawlers to be deployed off the Indian coast for deep sea fishing. Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, a combine of fishers under the Left-leaning Trade Union Congress of India, organised a webinar to elicit opinion from the stakeholders on the issue. The president of the Aikya Vedhi pointed out that the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre had withdrawn the Meena Kumari Committee report on deep sea fishing following widespread protests from the fishing community.

However, the State which was on the forefront of the protest against the committee, was following a path that was in the opposite direction, he said. The State government has not done proper homework when entering into an MoU for building fishing trawlers. Sunil Mohammed, a retired scientist from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, was cited as expressing the opinion that though the fishing sector needed to be modernised it must done in a phased manner. Kumbalam Rajappan and Jackson Pollayil, representing fishers' unions in the traditional sector, were among those who expressed their opinion against the MoU. KSINC sources had said when the controversy broke out that the MoU was for a major work order for the corporation, which had boat building facilities and that there was a confusion on the issue. The trawlers being built by the U.S. company may be deployed in other parts of India if there was a problem in Kerala.

Kerala: New system to check sea erosion

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/new-system-to-check-sea-erosion/article33856416.ece

"In a departure from the traditional method of using seawalls to protect the shoreline from coastal erosion, the government has launched a pilot project to build a geotube-based offshore breakwater system at Poonthura. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan launched the project online on Tuesday. "The accelerated erosion along the Poonthura-Valiathura coast and the failure of seawalls as an effective coastal defence mechanism led the government to think of this option," he said. The Rs. 150-crore project will be funded by the Kerala Industrial Infrastructure Fund Board (KIIFB) and implemented by the Coastal Development Corporation with technical support from the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT). The pilot phase will cover 700 m off the Poonthura coast. With the loss of sand from the beach, fishermen have been finding it tough to haul their boats ashore. During the monsoon when the sea turns rough, they have no option but to depend on the Vizhinjam harbour to put out to sea. The breakwater will intercept the waves and reduce their intensity to prevent coastal erosion and allow beach nourishment. It will be extended from Valiathura to Beemapally and Shanghumghom later. Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma presided over the function which also saw the inauguration of a project to deposit artificial reefs along the coast to provide a breeding ground for fish. V.S. Sivakumar, MLA, was among those present.

Kerala: Long wait ends, fishers in Kozhikode get community hall

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/long-wait-ends-fishers-in-kozhikode-get-community-hall/article33837183.ece

"The long wait of coastal residents for a community hall ended on Saturday, when Finance Minister T.M. Thomas Isaac inaugurated 'Samudra', constructed at a cost of Rs.2.26

crore on West Hill beach. A. Pradeepkumar, MLA, who sanctioned funds for the project, said it was the first-of-its-kind project for fishermen in Kerala. The construction was completed by maintaining architectural excellence and with modern facilities, he said. Fisheries Department officials said fishermen families were forced to depend on private auditoriums for conducting events and many of them could not afford such facilities. The engineers involved in the project said the auditorium could accommodate over 600 persons and had an open air stage, comfort station blocks, spacious parking area, and kitchen and dining hall. Officials said the space would be allotted to fishermen at affordable rates for conducting private events. With government permission, the space could also be rented out to others, they said.

Kerala: Tourism, fishing activities impacted after oil spill from Titanium factory into sea

https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/tourism-fishing-activities-impacted-after-oil-spill-from-titanium-factory-into-sea/80821487

"A glass furnace pipe of Travancore Titanium Products Ltd (TTP), a public sector unit making titanium dioxide, broke on Wednesday leading to a major oil spill into the sea and parts of coastal area in Thiruvananthapuram, after which tourism and fishing activities in the region have been banned as a precautionary measure. Thiruvananthapuram District Collector Navjot Khosa, who visited the area yesterday afternoon to evaluate the situation, said that the situation is under control. ""There is no need to fear and as a precautionary measure, tourism on the beaches of Veli, Vettukadu and Shankhumukham and fishing in the sea from these places has been banned for two days,"" she said.

The collector said that the source of the oil leak was quickly identified and closed, preventing the oil from spreading to the sea on a large scale. ""Meanwhile, the State Pollution Control Board is carefully assessing the extent of the oil spill and the problems that will be caused due to it. The Coast Guard is also an hourly check to assess how much oil has leaked into the sea,"" said the Collector who is also the head of district Disaster Management Authority. ""Preliminary reports from the Coast Guard high tide oil has not spilled too much on seas. However, oil has spread along the coast. Apart from this, it is also mixed in the coastal soil,"" she said. The collector also said that the oily topsoil will be removed from the coastline area soon. ""The oil is now spread from Vettukadu to Veli. This sand will be removed with JCB to the company's own site and the oil will be neutralized with an oil neutralizer. The company has been strictly instructed to complete this expeditiously. Soil removal will be the first in densely populated areas. The Collector said that the Pollution Control Board is in discussions with experts regarding the removal of oil spills off the coast,"" she added. The disaster management authority also instructed the company to immediately remove the oil that had accumulated in the area that had flowed into the sea through the canal and clean up the area. The Collector was accompanied by officials from the Pollution Control Board and officials from the Revenue and

Police Departments. Meanwhile, fishermen in the area said that a lot of fishes and sea turtles have been found dead on the seashore.

Kerala: As jellyfish blooms increase in North, fishers put a pause on work

https://india.mongabay.com/2021/02/as-jellyfish-blooms-increase-in-north-kerala-fishers-put-a-pause-on-work/

"In the early hours of the day, when the sky is clear and blue, swarms of jellyfish wade through the waters surrounding Kavvayi islands, some four kilometres from the nearest town, Payyanur, in Kannur district of Kerala. “It is a beautiful sight indeed. When you watch them slowly propel themselves through the water, they don’t even seem that dangerous,” says Satheeshan T.V. a fisher worker from the island. Aesthetics aside, jellyfish blooms sighted in estuaries in and around Kavvayi as well as Madakkal, Nileshwaram, Padanna, Valiyaparamba and neighbouring regions in Kasargod district have become a cause for concern for the fisher workers here. Sighted from November to March, jellyfish blooms are almost an annual phenomenon in these coastal regions of North Malabar.

However, their scale has increased at an unprecedented rate, observe fisher workers from the region. “Normally, we wouldn’t mind. We have been sighting them every year, so you expect them to bloom at this time. We try to avoid trapping them in our nets as much as we can. But now, it appears that their numbers are increasing at a steady rate, so much so that some of us have to stop going for work for days,” says Madhu, a long-time fisherman, who stays near Madakkal. Jellyfish is a collective term for any umbrella-shaped gelatinous animal in marine waters and is considered the oldest animal found on earth, having overcome 500 million years through natural selection. Over 90 percent of a jellyfish’s body is composed of water. Experts estimate that India is home to around 50 jellyfish species, out of which at least 20 species have been identified in Kerala. Around six species of these have reported regular blooms in the state. A 2016 article by A. Biju Kumar and Riyas A., published by Society for Environmental Education Kerala (SEEK), has elucidated that jellyfish blooms have been notably increasing in Kollam district’s Paravur, Elathur and Korappuzha in Kozhikode, as well as Nileshwaram and Padanna in Kasargod.

While venomous stinger jellyfish species have been reported across the globe, regional scientists say that most of the species found in Kerala’s coasts are not fatal and can, at the most, induce itching and swelling, upon contact. Jellyfish woes for fisher workers, aquaculture The discomfort caused by certain jellyfish is such that the indigenous species has been named after it. The local name for jellyfish is ‘kadal chori’, which literally translates to ‘sea-itch’. In Kavvayi and neighbouring regions in Kannur and Kasargod, they are also called ‘kanjaampothu’. However, the fisherfolk also mention that not all jellyfish are harmful. “There is a white jellyfish (Acromitus flagellatus) with black patches on its umbrella, which is mostly

innocuous and commonly seen here, especially near the mangroves. There is another yellow jellyfish (Chrysaora caliparea), and it's more dangerous. If you touch it, it stings for a second and then you start itching. There's nothing you can do but wait for it to pass," says Sandeep CK, who works as a tourist guide and fisher worker in Kavvayi. Apart from the severe itching, fishers are troubled by jellyfish that clog their nets; it is often an arduous task to shake them off. With the ongoing prawns and shrimps season, the presence of jellyfish makes it difficult to efficiently catch other types of fish, say the workers.

"During the prawns season, we throw our nets hoping for a good catch, but what do we get instead? Hundreds of jellyfish. If their liquid splashes on our face or eyes by accident while we shake them off our nets, our eyes begin to swell. We'll have to stay away from work if that happens,' says Satheeshan. These free-swimming animals are known to reduce the marine resources available for catch, and reduce the number of fishing days for fishermen. For instance, a study published by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in 2015 found that jellyfish are also known to feast on sardine larva in substantial quantities. This has the potential to disrupt the marine food chain as well, the study suggests. T. Purushothaman, a shrimp farmer from Payyanur and president of Aquaculture Development Cooperative Society (ADCOS), further observes that these jellyfish were found preying on post-larva shrimps, which affects their breeding.

"During the time of high tide, we've seen jellyfishes swim along with post larva shrimps, and feed on them. This ultimately has an impact on the recruitment of shrimps," said the aqua-farmer, who is also the recipient of the Jagjivan Ram Innovative Farmer award instituted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). Coastal aquaculture is one of the fastest-growing industries in India, with a total of 1.53 lakh (153,000) hectare area in nine maritime states under shrimp culture producing 6.8 lakh (680,000) metric tonnes of product, data sourced from Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) shows. Such "rapidly increasing aquaculture/mariculture/cage culture practices can act as a catalyst for jellyfish swarming," a study on jellyfish aggregations, published in 2020, found. Other industries such as tourism, power generation, desalination, and shipping have also reported considerable economic losses due to jellyfish blooms.

"Jellyfish are known to sting swimmers and tourists in Kerala's beaches. Sometimes, dead jellyfish collectively deposit on the shores of the beach, which impacts the aesthetics of the region," observes Savitha Mohanan K.M., a research scholar from Kannur University, who has also worked as a project assistant in the Fisheries Department in Kanhangad. Causes for jellyfish surge While there is no scientific consensus on whether jellyfish are exponentially increasing at a quantifiable rate across the globe, it is safe to argue that the jellyfish blooms have been increasing, rather than decreasing, in most places where they have been studied. A 2012 study (by Brotz et al.) showed a 62 percent increase in jellyfish blooms out of the 45

Large Marine Ecosystems (LME) studied across the world, wherein the Arabian Sea also noted an increasing trend. Jellyfish blooms have been sighted in Thiruvananthapuram, beaches in Goa, Mumbai, Visakhapatnam, Odisha among other coastal regions.

In India's west coast, "majority of blooms occur towards the end of the southwest monsoon (June-September); blooms of Crambionella orsini start towards the end of monsoon and last still post-monsoon (October-January), while Acromitus flagellatus blooms occur in backwaters during November-May," a study by Riyas A. and Biju Kumar, Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries under University of Kerala, noted. What are the possible reasons for this increase in the number of jellyfish blooms along the coast of Kerala? As per regional scientists and marine biologists, this surge is attributed to several factors, both natural and man-made ones. A variety of natural factors, including winds, changing tidal movements, surface currents, water temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, as well as man-made factors- such as water quality deterioration, eutrophication, overfishing, translocation, habitat modification have a significant role to play here.The complex life cycle of this Cnidarian species is a major contributing factor for its unique existence, which is often impervious to rising temperatures and lack of oxygen in the water.

They can survive in such conditions, as opposed to other marine beings. Therefore, a rise in sea temperature and global warming can facilitate these blooms," says Riyas A., research scholar. But researchers also mention that it would be wrong to say that climate change is the only reason for this global phenomenon. "Kerala's coastal infrastructure can be another factor. Two-thirds of the state's seawalls are made of granite, providing a hard surface for jellyfish larva to settle and multiple," notes A. Biju Kumar. Increasing marine activities, which lead to rising nutrient levels in the sea (particularly phosphates, leading to eutrophication) can increase the productivity of planktons, which jellyfish mostly feed on. "When the number of planktons increases, jellyfish also increase. Its natural predators like sea turtles and swordfish are supposed to prey on jellyfish and maintain the balance of the marine food chain, but when there are fewer predators, it is only natural that jellyfish populations surge," added the professor.

The way forward Scientists are united in their opinion that not only are there no quick-fixes to this issue, but also that such an approach would be detrimental to the study of the species. "We are yet to efficiently and economically utilise the jellyfish found in Kerala's coasts, as opposed to states like Andhra Pradesh, which started engaging in jellyfish processing, trade and export to Southeast-Asian countries four to five years ago," observes Dinesh Kaippilly, Head of the Department, Aquaculture, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS). Export earnings from jelly fish in the state are negligible: In the last 20 years, exports have remained at a meagre 1,092 tonnes in the state. It was only in 2000, when large numbers of jellyfish blocked the cooling system of the Madras Atomic Power Station (MAPS) in Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu, that discussions on jellyfish blooms and their consequences gained spotlight in India.

“Lack of adequate background and historical data pertinent to the region is a major deterrent for jellyfish studies.

This is because the species had no economic value earlier, and it is only now that some research is being done on its export and trade value. Its impact on aquaculture also needs to be scientifically studied, because this definitely has ramifications on the marine economy of the state,” says Biju Kumar. The species’ taxonomic diversity and complex life cycle make it further challenging for researchers to properly categorise and mark their surge in population because the rate of jellyfish blooms are often variable and irregular. It is in this hope that the University of Kerala plans to host the Seventh International Jellyfish Bloom Symposium at Thiruvananthapuram in 2022, in an attempt to address the gap in the region’s jellyfish studies. The scientists, therefore, call for a holistic understanding of the surge of jellyfish blooms. While this seems to be linked to human activities, their mechanisms need to be thoroughly researched, due to the significant impact it has on marine ecosystems and human beings. Fisher workers, meanwhile, are on the look-out for other options, like new devices, to tackle the jellyfish influx.

Kerala: Seaweed farming project yet to take off

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/seaweed-farming-project-yet-to-take-off/article33760141.ece

"A pilot project on seaweed farming, mooted by the Fisheries Department, is yet to take off on account of constraints imposed by the dynamics of the coastal waters off Kerala and questions regarding its feasibility. Seaweed farming was in the discussion recently when Modadugu Vijay Gupta, fisheries scientist and winner of the 2005 World Food prize, urged Kerala to explore this industry at the just-concluded Kerala Looks Ahead conclave, organised by the State Planning Board. Though the Fisheries Department submitted a Rs.20 lakh pilot project to the State government last year, studies undertaken for preparing a detailed DPR raised certain doubts regarding the feasibility of this industry along the Kerala coast, Director of Fisheries C.A. Latha said. The pilot project involved establishing 250 units in the nine coastal districts at a cost of Rs.8,000 per unit. The department had also formed a panel for conducting the feasibility study headed by the Fisheries Director that included representatives of the Fisheries Department, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC), and the Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala (ADAK).ADAK expressed some concerns regarding the scope of the project.

We have deeper waters along the Kerala coast when compared to places suited for seaweed farming like Mandapam in Tamil Nadu. We lack protected bays, and the coast here experience

rough sea conditions through the year. Some pockets along the Kerala coast may be suitable. We are looking into what the constraints are and then trying to move forward," the Fisheries Director said. Equally importantly, the economic and social impact of the industry on the coastal communities also needed to be taken into account, she said. Dr. Vijay Gupta, while speaking on the theme of new challenges and opportunities in fisheries, had wanted the State to explore the potential of this multi-billion dollar global industry. The Central government too was encouraging coastal states to take up seaweed farming. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) places thrust on it as a means of job creation. In the 2021-22 budget, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced a Multipurpose Seaweed Park in Tamil Nadu calling seaweed farming "an emerging sector with potential to transform the lives of coastal communities".

Kerala: Fishers opting for juvenile harvesting

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-opting-for-juvenile-harvesting/article33768822.ece

"As the fisheries sector enters another annual lean season, fishers in many parts are opting for juvenile harvesting, a dangerous and illegal practice that invariably leads to the depletion of marine stock. Apart from affecting aquatic biodiversity, boats targeting shoals of edible juveniles also risk the growth of seafood industry. According to fishers, the current dry spell will continue for a couple of months and they are forced to net whatever is available. "Fishing days started to shrink after Ockhi and in 2020 we got minimal working days. Till January end there was a marginal increase in catch, but now we are going through a very difficult phase. We know the practice is unethical and harmful in the long run, but right now we can't survive without indulging in juvenile fishing," says Surendran, fisher. Despite Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) warning the fishers not to harvest oil sardines, many of the boats return with the fish staple that had hit the lowest catch volume in 2019. After CMFRI researchers found scattered sardine shoals along Kerala coast in January 2021, fishers were advised not to catch them for three or more months even if they fall above the Minimum Legal Size (MLS).

What we get in market now is oil sardines that are at the brink of MLS and it's a very alarming situation. They trap sardine shoals with mesh size normally used for catching anchovy and if the practice continues, it will reflect in the catch of 2021. The researchers have spotted occurrence of shoals and only after observing the exploitation rate we can talk about the change

in biomass and catch. Their predictions had gone wrong in the past due to juvenile exploitation," says Dr. K.K.Appukuttan, marine fisheries expert and former scientist with CMFRI. He adds that a good percentage of the juvenile catch end up at fish meal plants and an organised group is working for the fish meal fish oil (FMFO) industry. "They use carrier boats to ferry the catch and load it in trucks at night." Fisheries officials say though they get several complaints about juvenile fishing, not many boats with fish below MLS are seen in harbours. "We are well aware of the stock status of oil sardine, but if the catch is above MLS we can't take any action. All we can do is spread awareness," says K.Suhair, Deputy Director, Fisheries Department.

Kerala: Fishers slam MoU for trawlers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-slam-mou-for-trawlers/article33754326.ece

"Fishers' unions have slammed reports that the Kerala State Inland Navigation Corporation (KSINC) is building 400 trawlers for a US-based company, even as the Fisheries Department categorically denied any knowledge of an MoU between the two entities for the trawler project. Both Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi and Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, representing traditional fishers, said the widely reported development was an indication of the invasion of the fishing sector by big capital. "It is totally against the policies of the State government and will seriously impact the current equilibrium in the sector," said Charles George of Aikya Vedhi. Meanwhile, Minister for Fisheries J. Mercykutty Amma denied any knowledge of the development. She said no licence was being issued to trawlers. According to her, the Fisheries Department is in negotiation with Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) for building 10 tuna long liners and gillnet boats for the cooperative sector.

The Minister felt that more vessels in the fishing scene could trigger conflict for resources. V.D. Majeendran of the Matsya Thozhilali Federation said no stakeholder was aware of any development related to building or deploying more trawlers off the Kerala coast. "There is no space for more vessels, as marine resources are already much stretched," he said. A senior KSINC official said the MoU to build 400 trawlers for the US-based EMCC International at ?2,950 crore was a work order. "For KSINC it is a huge work order. They will utilise it [trawlers] in Gujarat or Odisha if they have any issues in Kerala." KSINC, created in 1975, is the pioneer in the public sector in inland navigation in Kerala waters. While it operates barges, the company has also two yards where it builds small vessels and carries out maintenance

work. The PSU also operates two cruise vessels — Sagararani and Nefertiti. The official also said the order for the vessels was from a private investor, who had signed an agreement with the State government during the investment promotion conclave ASCEND 2020. KSINC is to construct the vessel and provide infrastructure.

He said people were confusing other issues with KSINC's work. Mr. Majeendran was of the view that big capital is pressing to exploit the resources off the coast just as it has done on the coast. Reports of MoU for building trawlers is an indication of the shape of things to come when traditional fishers will be alienated. Mr. George, citing official estimates, argued that deep sea fishing off the coast of Kerala could support 37 tuna long liners and gillnet boats and 11 squid jiggers. More large vessels in the scene could end up in over-exploitation as "we are already harvesting resources at the optimum, sustainable level," he said. He also warned against any attempt by big capital to enter the scene, where traditional fishers are now struggling to eke out a living.

Kerala: Renovated fish landing centre set to open

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/renovated-fish-landing-centre-set-to-open/article33743640.ece

"After many years of wait and technical glitches, the development work of the Vellayil fish landing centre is finally nearing completion. The renovated area with improved facilities for the safe anchoring of boats and the auctioning of daily catch will be commissioned within a couple of weeks. It was in 2012 that the development proposal of the fish landing centre was given sanction. The expected time of completion then was in 2017. The project implementation got delayed due to several factors including the delay in the allocation of funds and retendering procedures. The technical issues related to the re-construction of breakwaters also interrupted the project. Fisheries Department officials said the renovated fish landing centre would have facilities such as safe wharf, auction hall, loading area, parking space, administrative block, improved electrification, hygienic drain, and compound wall. About ?75 crore has been so far spent for the improvement of the area, they said. According to the officials, the congestion at the Puthiyappa harbour would be reduced to a great extent with the opening of the Vellayil fish landing centre. The improved facilities for boat operations would naturally increase the daily catch and the revenue of fishers, they said. The leaders of various fishermen organisations said the full-fledged functioning of the Vellayil harbour would fetch its direct benefits to thousands of fishermen from the Kozhikode urban area.

Those who heavily depended on the Beypore and Puthiyappa harbours would be able to operate from Vellayil and it would be very convenient for fishers from Kamburam, Thoppayil, and Puthiyakadavu areas, they said. Meanwhile, some of them alleged that the harbour department had failed to complete the construction of the breakwaters as suggested by the experts in the

project area. According to them, it would badly affect the safety of the anchored fishing boats. They also claimed that the funds allotted by the State government for the purpose were diverted for de-silting work in the area. However, sources in the harbour engineering department rejected the allegation. They claimed that the work on a smaller portion was temporarily put on hold owing to the high tide and the difficulty in proceeding with the construction activity. They also said that the desilting work was launched to ensure the smooth movement of fishing boats.

Kerala: In good spot to augment fish wealth

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-in-good-spot-to-augment-fish-wealth/article33731686.ece

"Kerala, with its long coastline, inland resources, and educated workforce, is in an excellent position to increase the contribution of fisheries to the State's food basket and create the much-needed employment, Dr. Modadugu Vijay Gupta, World Food Prize winner and former assistant director general, World Fish Centre, has said. Dr. Gupta was speaking on 'Fisheries and developing economies: New challenges and opportunities' at the 'Kerala Looks Ahead' conclave organised by the State Planning Board. He called for an increase in the production of exportable fishes and the diversification of markets. Also, increasing domestic consumption was vital for sustaining the industry, he said. While fish production in the country rose from 1.3 million metric tonnes in 1965-66 to 13.7 million metric tonnes in 2018-19, it was still low compared to that of China. "It indicates that we have excellent opportunities for increasing our production, contributing to food, nutrition, and livelihood security," Dr. Gupta said. The Centre had targeted raising fish production to 22 million metric tonnes by 2025. Achieving this target was not impossible provided we have appropriate policies and the willpower, he said.

He urged Kerala to establish adequate infrastructure, gene banks, and diversify the species that were bred. Dr. Gupta underlined the need to reduce wastage in fish production, which currently stood at 30%. He urged Kerala to explore the possibilities in seaweed farming that accounted for a multi-billion USD industry worldwide. The State, with its long coastline, should identify suitable locations, he suggested. Dr. Gupta also pointed out that marine habitats, which remained largely unexplored, could prove to be goldmines for the development of health-pharmaceutical and nutraceuticals product. This aspects needed to be explored, he said. He also underscored the need to integrate fisheries and aquaculture into national development plans and policies.

Kerala: Signs pact with US-based EMCC for Rs 2,950 cr project

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/feb/02/kerala-signs-pact-with-us-based-emcc-for-rs-2950-cr-project-2258637.html

"US-based EMCC International and Kerala Shipping and Inland Navigation Corporation Ltd (KSINC) have joined hands for a Rs 2,950 crore project to build deep-sea fishing trawlers, new harbours, and port development activities among others in a move that leapfrog Kerala's fishing sector. KSINC MD N Prasanth and EMCC International India Pvt Ltd president Shiju Varghese signed the MoU here on Tuesday. As per the deal, EMCC will build 400 trawlers in Kerala with the help of KSINC. Currently, foreign trawlers are more in use in the state. ""When this scientifically planned project is implemented, there will be a complete Kerala touch to this sector. Further, this will be the largest foreign investment project in the state,"" said a KSINC release here.

KSINC will be providing all technical help and giving full responsibility to EMCC to build the trawlers. The cost of building one trawler of international quality and standards is around Rs 2 crore. The 400 trawlers to be built is to be distributed to the existing fishermen of the state."When these many trawlers return from fishing, there will be a shortage of berthing facilities in Kerala. So KSINC will also be building new harbours and renovating and expanding existing harbours. EMCC will also be opening units in Kerala to process the fish harvested through these trawlers,"" the release said. Families of the fishermen will be given primacy in employment in these units. EMCC's Varghese said that processed food will be distributed through 200 outlets to be opened in Kerala and also exported to other countries as part of the project. Prasanth said that with this project, over 2500 employment opportunities will be created in the state. One trawler will be given free to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute for research purposes with the aim of using CMFRI's research developed methods for eco-friendly fishing. It is hoped that this can lead to doubling the income of fishermen communities. Hospitals for fishermen will also be set up as part of the project. The first one will be set up at Attingal in Thiruvananthapuram. Prasanth also said that this is the biggest work order in the history of KSINC.

Kerala: Draft National Fisheries Policy 2020: Fishermen voice concern over rising fuel cost

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/draft-national-fisheries-policy-2020-fishermen-voice-concern-over-rising-fuel-cost/article33738724.ece

"The spiralling fuel cost is a concern raised by the fishing community and they have highlighted the same as their comments in the draft of National Fisheries Policy 2020, urging the government to take effective steps to tide over the worsening situation. Any national policy

on fishing without addressing the problem of rising diesel prices will torpedo attempts to mitigate the expenses and streamline modern methods of fishing, the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association said. Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, general secretary of the association, said currently fishing has become a high-cost incurring profession as the price of diesel is being increased every day. “Any national policy on fishing without addressing the problem of diesel prices has no nexus with the policy,” he said. The association also pointed out that the Covid pandemic has reduced the number of fishing days, leading to drop in fish prices and pushing the folk to virtual penury.

The marketing of fish without the interference of middlemen is the urgent need of the hour. The middlemen, auctioneer and the buyer are often one man or a group disguised in different names and exploiting the fishermen. Chinese trawlers The association also highlighted the presence of Chinese fishing trawlers intruding into Indian waters to amass the sea resources. The paradox is that these trawlers light five lakh watt powerful bulbs to lure the fish en masse, while the country's fishing boats are forbidden to use bulbs and fish in the darkness, he said. Narendra R Patil, chairperson of National Fishworkers Forum, said the entire draft NFP 2020 is largely focussed and designed for deep-sea fishers and not for the small-scale fishers. The marine fisheries sector plays a vital role in maritime trade and commerce, and also serves as a significant livelihood for millions of fishing and coastal communities.

Kerala: Cochin Fisheries Harbour gets budgetary support

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/cochin-fisheries-harbour-gets-budgetary-support/article33722532.ece

"The Union Budget 2021-22 has stated that substantial investments would be made in improving facilities at some of the major fishing hubs in the country, including Kochi. The other harbours and fish landing centres that found a place in the Budget speech were Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Paradip and Petuaghat. The five hubs will be developed into centres of economic activities. The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Cochin Port Trust had signed an agreement towards the end of September last year to modernise the fish landing centre and harbour at Thoppumpady. The improvement work at the harbour will help substantially increase the unit value of sea-caught fish as well as significantly reduce post-harvest losses. A memorandum of understanding was signed by the MPEDA chairman K.S. Srinivas and Cochin Port Trust chairperson M. Beena to launch the ?140-crore project.

According to an official communication at the time of the signing of the MoU, the resources for the project would be mobilised from various Central government schemes and a special purpose vehicle would be launched to implement the project. The Cochin Fisheries Harbour is one of the oldest in the State and was brought under the control of the Cochin Port Trust. The

facility is located on 27 acres and is the centre of business activities in West Kochi. Hundreds of seafood businesses in Ernakulam and Alappuzha depend solely on the supply of raw materials from the Thoppumpady harbour. Air-conditioned auction halls, packing hall and bays for loading and unloading, a reverse osmosis plant, rainwater harvesting facility, automated equipment such as tripods, conveyor belts and pallet jacks for better movement of fish within the harbour will be the key features of the developed harbour. There will be an effluent treatment plant, facilities for drivers as well as canteen and restrooms. Meanwhile, the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi has welcomed the Budget announcement and called it the right step forward for the fishing sector. But, Aikya Vedhi convenor Charles George said the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the fishing sector and traditional fishers had been ignored.

Kerala: New fisheries policy favours big capital, say associations

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/new-fisheries-policy-favours-big-capital-say-associations/article33706601.ece

"With the deadline for submitting proposals on the National Fisheries Policy 2020 ending on Saturday, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation, and the National Fish Workers Forum have written to the Union government, expressing apprehensions over the intentions of the government and the impact of the new regulations on the fishing sector. In their letter to the Joint Secretary, Fisheries, boat operators said the new regulations encouraged heavy private capital investment in the sector. The move will marginalise traditional fishers. “Instead of empowering traditional fishers who are highly skilled in deep sea fishing, the government wants private players to enter the scene. The move favours private capital,” said Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association here on Saturday. Jackson Pollayil of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation and Fish Workers Forum said though the Fishing Policy - 2020 largely depended on recommendations of various commissions appointed to study the sector, the government did not implement any of the recommendations that favoured traditional fishers. He pointed to the S. Ayappan Committee report, which had recommended that no foreign vessels be allowed to exploit resources in India’s economic zone.

The committee had recommended that the government help fishers through training and technical and financial help to fish in deep waters. However, the government now appears to be in favour of joint ventures between Indian and foreign companies, he said. Mr. Kalappurakkal said Chinese fishing vessels had been exploiting resources in Indian waters. “There are around 800 of them, and the government has not heeded to the pleas of fishers to take action against them,” he added. Fisher folk should be taken into confidence and their inalienable rights should be respected, the letter from boat operators said. The rights of traditional fishers cannot be

sacrificed to allow new entrants to flourish in the field, it added. Meanwhile, boat owners felt that allowing fishers to market catch without middlemen was one of the key requirements of the sector. Even export-oriented fish does not fetch a decent price for fishers. Mr. Kalappurakkal also said that the policy draft was silent on the almost daily increase in the price of diesel and how it would affect the lives of fishers, who constituted the backbone of the coastal economy.

Kerala: Without a good catch in months, coastal Kerala is in troubled waters

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/without-a-good-catch-in-months-coastal-kerala-is-in-troubled-waters-1.5389785

"Coastal Kerala is going through a tough time as it has been months since fishing boats received a good catch. Mackerel and sardines, which used to be plentiful during December and January, have been very scarce this season. Taking a medium sized boat into the sea will cost Rs 3,000 while a large boat will cost Rs 20,000. After returning to the shore without much fish for a few times, the fishermen have decided not to venture into the sea. Now the boats are all stationed on the shores. Many of those who received fishing boats and nets through Matsyafed are panicking as they are unable to repay the loans. Most of the boats are stationed on the beaches at Nayarambalam, Edavanakkad and Cherai. The only relief is for the small two-person boats that return with sufficient fish to make ends meet.

Kerala: Concern over anchoring of fishing boats in Kadalundi estuary

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/concern-over-anchoring-of-fishing-boats-in-estuary/article33679439.ece

"The anchoring of fishing boats in Kadalundi estuary is posing a threat to the ecologically sensitive mudflats and mangroves within the Kadalundi-Vallikkunnu Community Reserve (KVCR). Fishing boats from neighbouring places like Parappanangadi and Beypore have been increasingly seeking Kadalundi estuary for anchorage since the COVID-19 lockdown. The KVCR authorities, environmentalists, forest officials and scientists have warned that fishing boats in abundance can negatively affect KVCR, the first community reserve in the country. The oil that spills from boats and the increased movement of personnel working in boats within the ecologically fragile areas can negatively affect migrant birds that seek sanctuary in Kadalundi during the wintering months. Sensitive issue However, as it is a social issue involving the livelihood of fishermen, the authorities have been cautious in their approach. The Malabar Natural History Society (MNHS) and the KVCR managing committee raised concerns about Kadalundi's ecological degradation in a recent meeting convened by the forest authorities in Kozhikode. "It is a sensitive issue, but it should be addressed for the conservation of the KVCR.

There has been a perceptible decrease in the number of migrant birds arriving at Kadalundi,"

said MNHS president Satyan Mepayur, quoting scientists from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). CMFRI marinologists validated the adverse effects that increased presence of fishing boats in the estuary can cause on the mudflats that remain the lifeline for migrant birds. Thousands of migrant shorebirds belonging to species ranging from sand plovers to sand pipers have been reaching Kadalundi from across continents during winter. Lesser sand plover remains the most popular among the 50-odd species identified at Kadalundi, one of the most popular wintering destinations along the west coast of India.

Safe tourism P. Sivadasan, chairman of the KVCR managing committee, told The Hindu that increased presence of fishing boats would badly affect not only migrant birds, but also the tourism that they were promoting. “We are sanctioning only country boats with oars as part of promoting safe and sensitive tourism. If we don’t address in time such issues as waste and oil spill, the community reserve will die soon,” said Mr. Sivadasan. According to Mr. Satyan, the ecological changes taking place at Kadalundi would have cascading effects. The conservation of the mudflats had become the need of the hour, he said. T.R. Athira, who has been studying the habits of shorebirds reaching Kadalundi since 2016, said that there was a major change in the estuarine ecology after the back-to-back floods of 2018 and 2019. Sand dunes have increased, mangroves have proliferated and “ecological incursions of grave nature” have taken place at Kadalundi.

Kerala: Marine ambulance for Kozhikode coast

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/marine-ambulance-for-kozhikode-coast/article33645688.ece

"A marine ambulance, the long awaited emergency service to reach out to fishermen in case of an accident, is going to be a reality in Kozhikode coast. The customised boat made at Cochin Shipyard will reach the Beypore Port on January 29. According to Fisheries Department officials, the boat will be flagged off from Kochi by Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma on January 28. The full-time service of two paramedical staff and four rescue guards will be available in the ambulance, they add. Facilities The custom-made rescue boat, completed at a cost of Rs.6 crore, has many advanced features to attend to 10 rescued persons at a time. It has a length of 22.5 metres with a maximum speed of 14 knots. There are facilities such as examination and nursing room, medical bed, mortuary freezer and medical lockers. Though the ambulance will be anchored at Beypore, its service will be available across the northern Kerala coast during emergency situations.

With this, there are three marine ambulances now to assist see rescue operations along the Kerala coast. In the absence of such a service, fishermen had been heavily dependent on the service of the coast guard and other rescue forces. Many a time, it was local fishing boats which were used for emergency sea rescue operations on receiving alerts. The absence of basic life-

support facilities in such boats had come as a challenge for fishers even after successful rescue operations. A fisherman from Puthiyappa said the initial hours of care after the rescue was crucial for the survival of victims. “Only trained health workers will be able to handle it properly and complete the successful rescue mission. The marine ambulance will definitely be a solution,” he said. At the same time, some of the fishermen associations said the permitted operational area of 12 nautical miles was hardly sufficient for any successful rescue operation and such a short distance could be covered even by local rescue boats. According to them, operational permits should be given to cover a wider area as it only would help manage serious incidents. Arrangements are in place to accord a reception under the leadership of people’s representatives on the arrival of the rescue boat.

Kerala: Panel moots slew of measures to boost ornamental fisheries

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/panel-moots-slew-of-measures-to-boost-ornamental-fisheries/article33630071.ece

"The committee of experts constituted to study the problems dogging ornamental fisheries in the State has suggested, among other things, promoting indigenous varieties for export, establishing an aquatic quarantine centre, easing the process of brood stock imports to encourage local entrepreneurs, and setting up a laboratory for repackaging export consignments. A large variety of ornamental fish available in the Western Ghats region hold great potential for exports, said Riji John, Dean, Fisheries, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, who headed the committee. He pointed to the success of “Miss Kerala” or Red Line Torpedo Barb, which is indigenous to some of the streams in the Western Ghats and has been in great demand. Dr. John said that the breeding biology and seed production had been standardised for Miss Kerala. There were 117 varieties indigenous to the State, which held potential for ornamental fisheries. There was also potential for Kerala to grow into an exporter of marine ornamental fishes, he said. He said that import of brood stocks should be made easier to help local rearing. Groups such as Kudumbashree could be involved in rearing them until they attained the marketable size.

An aquatic quarantine centre was needed to ensure that pathogens did not enter the country through ornamental fish imports. The aquatic quarantine centre now was in Chennai for shrimps. Dr. John said that Kerala accounted for about 20 per cent of the ornamental fish exports from India and the State earned Rs.1.56 crore out of a total national export of Rs.7.6 crore. But there was high potential for the business, given the State’s natural advantages. Ornamental fisheries would get a big boost with the business being included in the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. The aim of the programme was to raise fish production to 220 lakh tonnes by 2024-25, at an average annual growth of nine per cent by investing around Rs.20,000 crore in various projects. Meanwhile, Kerala Aqua Ventures International Limited

(KAVIL), established in 2008-09 to help ornamental fisheries business, is reviving its activities after the infrastructure established initially suffered a setback during the floods of 2018 and 2019. A senior official said that the Ventures was now into establishing a brood stock bank, launching an aquarium fabrication unit and establishing an aquatic plant production unit. The process of revival of the hubs for ornamental fish production and rearing was also under way, he said.

Kerala: Protest brews among fishermen

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2021/jan/21/protest-brews-among-fishermen-2252823.html

"As many as 4,000 fishermen, engaged in 'kambavala' and 'thattamadi' fishing in the coastal areas of Thiruvananthapuram, have been in arms against the offshore breakwater project which they claim would adversely affect their fishing activities. The community claims they will not let the authorities execute the project at Valiyathura without receiving proper compensation. There are around 87 kambavala units in Poonthura that offer a livelihood for thousands of fishermen. The Trivandrum Kambavala Matsya Thozhilali Federation has given a memorandum to the fisheries minister, Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC), and the state government against the implementation of the project, alleging that it is unscientific. The federation is planning to take out a march and stage a protest in front of the assembly complex to draw the authorities' attention towards the concerns of these fishermen. "Since the launch of the breakwater construction to facilitate the construction of Vizhinjam Port, the fishermen have lost around 250 metres of shoreline from Poonthura to Veli," said Tony Oliver, president of the federation.

He added that the offshore breakwater projects are a failure and once the project is implemented at Poonthura, around 4,000 fishermen would lose their jobs. An official associated with the project said the project will be executed in a way that it wouldn't affect fishing activities. We will not be launching the project along the entire shoreline at the same time. The plan is to construct the breakwater segment-wise. So we will ensure that fishing activities are not hit by the construction work," said the official. Meanwhile, there are also allegations that the resistance is triggered by the quarry mafia. "Once the offshore breakwater project is implemented, there would not be any demand for rocks. They are scared and instigating fishermen against the project," an official said.

Kerala: As pandemic scare wanes, migrants return to work

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/as-pandemic-scare-wanes-migrants-

return-to-work/article33603895.ece

"With declining COVID-19 scare and opportunities in the construction sector picking up, the return of migrant labourers to Kerala is seemingly on a steady rise. Contractors said they were happy with the trend, as it would help the early completion of various pending projects. Local labour camps in north Kerala are almost full now. With hotels reopening, several migrants are back at work. Interestingly, new labourers are also joining work sites. S.N. Abhijith, a road contractor, said a majority of pending projects had resumed with the return of labourers from States like Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and West Bengal. "When native labourers demand wage hike citing shortage of hands and safety issues, migrant workers are happy with the current wages," he added. Considering the COVID-19 protocol and improved vigil, several work contractors are making their own arrangements to facilitate safe travel by migrant labourers. They have been hiring luxury buses for the purpose owing to unavailability of train services.

At the same time, those who returned to harbours for work are a seemingly disgruntled lot owing to declining catch and steep fall in revenue. Boat owners said many labourers were now returning to their native States thanks to the looming crisis in the sector.Following the COVID-19 outbreak, fishermen are in dire straits. Poor catch has forced several boat owners to cut short trips as well as the number of labourers," said Karichal Preman, vice president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association. A majority of such workers are from Odisha and Andhra Pradesh, and they do not have the skills for other vocations," he added. For the record, large-scale exodus of migrant workers due to the pandemic had virtually stalled the construction sector and the fishing industry. According to the Labour Department, around three lakh migrant workers had returned home following the lockdown. Nearly 50% of them came back, officials said.

Hologram Registration Boards to ensure safety of fishermen in Kerala, India

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/jan/17/hologram-registration-boards-to-ensure-safety-of-kerala-fishermen-2251363.html

"In an effort to ensure the safety of seafaring fishermen, Kerala is installing high-security registration boards on fishing boats, for the first time in the world. The project is being implemented by the State Fisheries Department for the complete protection and remote monitoring of boats. In the first phase, hologram registration boards will be installed on 300 boats, said fisheries department in a release. Such boards have already been installed to about 100 boats in Neendakara, Munambam and Kochi fishing harbours. 1,500 boats will be covered in the second phase, and in the third phase, about 4,000 fishing boats across the State will be installed with the hologram registration boards. These boards are installed at a subsidised rate, with the technical assistance from CDiT. The high-security registration board with GPS /

GPRS networking is a system that helps in locating and identifying deep-sea fishing boats. It is made of materials that are not damaged by saltwater in the sea. It has holographic and laser systems to detect fake registrations.

A hologram board is attached on the top of the boat's wheelhouse for better identification and communication. This ensures a clear view of 360 degrees. This also avoids damage to the registration board due to direct contact with saltwater and collisions between boats, said officials. Its square pyramidal structure of the high-security registration board can withstand the rough climate and strong winds in rough seas. The hologram is attached to all four corners of the board. It is also helpful for security agencies as crime and smuggling using boats can be prevented. Foreign ships and boats entering our territory for illegal fishing pose a threat to the security of the country itself. The high-security registration board for boats with GPS / GPRS networking has been developed taking into account all the threats at sea. Fishing vessels usually stay in the deep sea areas with GPRS connectivity zone for 10-15 days.

Due to the lack of a communication network there, the centralised monitoring system is unable to track their activities in the deep sea. In this case, enforcement agencies such as the Coast Guard, Coastal Police and Navy can monitor fishing boats using government-approved registration numbers only. Authorities will be able to identify and investigate any unregistered fishing boats and those displaying fake registration numbers if they carry out any illegal activities at the national maritime border. The bogus number can be identified quickly as the registration number and serial number can be verified using a satellite-based communication device, said the release.

Kerala and Karnataka: Drop in sardine catch poses a risk to nutrition security

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/drop-in-sardine-catch-poses-a-risk-to-nutrition-security-11610559894711.html

"If you love your fish or just crave natural sources of Omega3 here's a fact that should alarm you: every time a fishing vessel has returned to coast in the last two years, it has had fewer sardines in its catch. Unsustainable fishing practices and changing ocean environments have brought down the population of the popular fish. The declining numbers have also boosted the price of sardines and prompted authorities to issue alerts to fishermen. The declining population of the sardine, which now costs as much as its larger cousin the mackerel, traces its roots to overfishing, besides dwindling breeding periods and places due to marine pollution, worrying scientists, fishermen and consumers alike.

India's apex fisheries body the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has issued alerts to fishermen and fisheries, and warned in a June 2019 report against the undesirable practice of capture fishery and juvenile fishing—both don't leave enough time for the sardines

to breed. Kerala and Karnataka together saw a decline in sardine catch from 119,000 tonnes in 2018 to 74,000 tonnes in 2019. Kerala's sardine catch was 390,000 tonnes in 2012. This came down precipitously to 77,099 tonnes in 2018 and 45,300 tonnes in 2019. CMFRI scientists Pratibha Rohit and Rajesh K.M. warn that if left unchecked, the 2020 catch might be even lower. Ramacharya Puranik, director of the Karnataka fisheries department, attributes much of this to capture fishery. "Fishermen use bright lights to attract the fish at night. This is illegal and destructive. Secondly, they use nets with smaller gaps which will not allow the juvenile fish to escape. We have banned both types of fishing in Karnataka and instructed the coastal security police to curb such activities,"" Ramacharya said. Fisheries economist Ramachandra Bhatta cites other reasons as well. "Sardines are used for multiple value addition. Firstly, it is used for producing fish meal, predominantly for feeding the shrimp farms because the sardines are a low-value fish; if the catch does not improve the commercials for fish meal, factories will also dwindle.

Similarly, those companies that produce Omega 3 fatty acids need Indian oil sardines in high volumes for their production line. Sardine is a pelagic short-lived fish abundantly found in Karnataka and Kerala coasts. The decline of sardines started in 2010, although the significant decline happened after 2018. There is an inverse relationship between the increasing demand for shrimp feed and sardine fishery. Ignoring its role in nutrition security and promoting fishmeal and oil industries is an ecological disaster as 60% of the country's fish meal units is concentrated in three coastal districts of Karnataka which has led to overfishing of sardines,"" Bhatta said. According to Bhatta, Kerala's sardine numbers in 2012 were never seen again, which is a matter of concern. According to the National Institute of Oceanography, there has been no significant change in the temperature and other natural conditions that prevails in the Arabian Sea to affect marine creatures to this extent. Experts at the fisheries college affiliated to the Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries University at Bidar have been warning about the degeneration of the coastal ecosystem and the sardine breeding grounds near the estuarine waters of Karnataka. Pollution, destruction of mangroves and excessive human activity also aided the decline.

Kerala: Hologram Registration Boards to ensure safety of Kerala fishermen

http://www.uniindia.com/hologram-registration-boards-to-ensure-safety-of-kerala-fishermen/south/news/2294892.html

"In an effort to ensure the safety of seafaring fishermen, Kerala is installing high-security registration boards on fishing boats, for the first time in the world. The project is being implemented by the State Fisheries Department for the complete protection and remote

monitoring of boats. In the first phase, hologram registration boards will be installed on 300 boats, an official press release said here on Sunday. Such boards have already been installed to about 100 boats in Neendakara, Munambam and Kochi fishing harbours. 1,500 boats will be covered in the second phase, and in the third phase, about 4,000 fishing boats across the State will be installed with the hologram registration boards. These boards are installed at a subsidised rate, with the technical assistance from CDiT. The high-security registration board with GPS / GPRS networking is a system that helps in locating and identifying deep-sea fishing boats. It is made of materials that are not damaged by saltwater in the sea. It has holographic and laser systems to detect fake registrations.

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Kerala: Gender budgeting touches Rs.4,025-cr.

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/gender-budgeting-touches-4025-cr/article33596027.ece

"Gender budgeting in the State has continued to move in the right direction with allocations for women going to 19.54%, a huge improvement from 11.4% in 2017-18. The gross provision for women in the State budget in 2020-21 was 18.4%. While the allocation for women-specific schemes has come down from 7.3% in 2020-21 to 6.54%, indicating slower growth, that for composite schemes has risen from 11.1% to 13% in the same period. In 2020-

21, Rs.1,509.33-crore was allocated for women-specific schemes and Rs.2,300.54-crore for composite schemes, taking the total gender budget for the year to Rs.3,809.87 crore, which was 18.4% of the total Plan outlay. The total outlay for 2021-22 has increased to Rs.4,025.4 crore (19.54%), with the allocation for women-specific components coming to Rs.1,346.91 crore and that for composite schemes to Rs.2,678.49 crore. The budget acknowledges that though slow, there has been a growth in flow of resources to women in 2021-22 despite the shortfall in GST revenues, fiscal constraints, and huge losses in production and employment. This is owing to the emphasis on women's employment and livelihood support measures. Funds have been allocated for livelihood support projects for Kudumbashree, agriculture, animal husbandry, women and child development, and fisheries under the Rebuild Kerala Initiative.

Though women have been included in composite schemes in agriculture and allied activities and sectors such as IT and ITes and industry and services, their share in employment generation though small is growing. It is expected that this year women will set up enterprises in select industrial parks, in nine of which women facilitation centres to support educated women's participation in the workforce are proposed to be set up. A women entrepreneurship mission proposed by KSIDC, women entrepreneurship start-up programmes under the Kerala Startup Mission, Skill development and capacity building programmes, Gender Data Centre in collaboration with UN Women, a women football academy under the Kerala State Sports Council, building materials production unit by women, and allocation for civil defence of Kerala are some of the highlights of the gender budgeting this year. For Anganwadis The outlay for the Women and Child Development Department is Rs.901 crore. Of this, Rs.607 crore is for anganwadis. Monthly pension of anganwadi teachers has been increased to Rs.2,000, and that of helpers to Rs.1,500. Their monthly allowances too have been hiked. The outlay for women protection and development is Rs.208 crore. Child friendly model grama panchayats will be encouraged. An amount of Rs.84 crore has been earmarked for child protection and development.

Kerala: Caught in Chinese net, Kerala seafood exporters lose crores, seek govt help

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/jan/17/caught-in-chinese-net-kerala-seafood-exporters-lose-crores-seek-govthelp-2251159.html

"China's suspension of the import of Indian seafood products has added to the woes of exporters in Kerala already hit by the Covid pandemic. According to the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI), China has rejected Indian fish consignments alleging detection of Covid traces in them during the past two months. The move followed India's ban on 267 Chinese mobile apps in the aftermath of the border standoff, said SEAI Kerala chapter president Alex K Ninan.It has been a tough time for the seafood export sector after the restrictions on export due to Covid restrictions. The Chinese companies have been rejecting our

consignments for the past two months. The allegations of Covid traces in consignments are just excuses. We feel it is a reaction to the ban on Chinese apps. Exporters in Gujarat alone have incurred a loss of Rs 1,200 crore due to the rejection and the non-payment of dues," he said. Sources said many exporters in Kerala are on the brink of bankruptcy due to issues including Covid restrictions, blockade of consignments in Colombo Transhipment Port and the China standoff. Chinese market alone accounts for around 25% of Kerala's seafood exports. The export to Europe too has been affected due to the stringent restrictions triggered by the second wave of Covid-19.

There has been a decline in exports to the USA as well. "Though South Asian countries are open, the companies are being forced to reduce the price due to the slump in market," said Alex. Seafood products from Kerala, particularly Indian shrimp and ribbon fish, are in high demand in China. However, the companies are not keen to import Indian products due to the deterioration in relationship between the two countries, he said.Many export firms are in deep crisis. The banks are sending recovery notices. We need government support to tide over the crisis, but there has not been any response to the representation given to the Union government," said Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) Kerala chapter president Alex K Ninan. Meanwhile, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has written to the Prime Minister seeking his intervention to revive the sector. According to general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, the livelihood of the fishing community has been severely affected due to Covid restrictions. The fishermen and boat workers have been pushed to penury as they could venture into the sea only for 45 days in 2020, he said.

Kerala: KSRTC to convert buses to sell fish, Milma products

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/ksrtc-to-convert-buses-to-sell-fish-milma-products-kerala-1.5346806

"After renting double-decker buses for wedding, KSRTC has decided to use buses for various purposes to increase revenue. As part of this, a few buses will be utilized to transport goods and converted as mobile fish stores and food cafes. It is reported that KSRTC started to convert the design of some buses for this purpose. In the initial phase, KSRTC buses will be used to transport goods from Supplyco depots to Maveli store. At first, logistics vehicles (mobile workshop) at major depots will be converted as goods vehicles. KSRTC will charge Rs 1.25 lakh as monthly rent from Supplyco for deploying the buses. If this project turns successful, KSRTC buses will be employed for private purposes. Apart from this, KSRTC buses will be taken to the streets as mobile fish stall and food cafe. KSRTC in association with

Matsyafed and Milma will arrange fish shelf and food café in the buses. Accommodation for workers will be provided within the bus that gets converted as fish stall. Old buses will be used for this purpose. KSRTC will charge a fixed rent including GST for fish sale. Milma will start food cafe in KSRTC buses very soon. Milma will start the first food cafe in KSRTC bus at Punaloor KSRTC depot in Pathanamthitta. 43 products of Milma will be available in the cafe that operated in the bus parked here. Seating arrangement for 8 people will be arranged on the bus.""The cafe will have separate entry and exit,"" informed Milma district assistant manager (marketing) Jaya Raghavan. Pathanamthitta DTO Roy Jacob reported that KSRTC buses will be given to government agencies including Matsyafed as per their demand

Kerala: Four fishermen go missing off Thalikkulam coast in Thrissur

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2021/jan/05/four-fishermen-go-missing-off-thalikkulam-coast-in-thrissur-2245760.html

"Four fishermen went missing after the fishing vessel they were in capsized mid-sea off the coast of Thalikkulam in Thrissur on Tuesday. As per the preliminary reports ""a fishing vessel named Parashinikadavu Muthapan that left Thalikkulam beach in the morning, capsized in the rough sea."" There were four fishermen in the vessel when it capsized around 5-6 km off the coast of Thalikkulam. The four were identified as 60-years-old Kuttan of Thampan Kadavu, 60-years-old Subramanian of Thampan Kadavu, 50-years-old Iqbal of Thalikkulam and 55-years-old Vijayan of Nambi Kadavu in Thrissur. The patrolling boat of the fisheries department, Coastal Security Police and the fishermen have launched a search operation to trace the missing fishermen. There was strong wind in the sea on Tuesday morning, said police.

Kerala: Oil sardines making a comeback on Kerala coast, but fishers should wait

https://indianexpress.com/article/india/kerala/oil-sardines-making-a-comeback-on-kerala-coast-but-fishers-should-wait-7129173/

"After years of low yield of Indian oil sardines along the Kerala coast, researchers at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) have said that the staple fish of the state seems to be on a path of revival. Thanks to favourable conditions in the marine ecosystem, scattered batches of immature sardines have been located along the state's coast. But there's a catch. CMFRI researchers have warned fishers from catching these stocks now as it would have an adverse effect on the revival of the fish. The current batch of sardines located along the coast have an average size of 14-16 cms and hence yet to achieve the reproductive stage. In order to attain full maturity, they require another three or more months.Considering this unusual and unfavourable status of the stock, we advise not to catch these sardines even though they fall

above the Minimum Legal Size (MLS) of 10 cm", said Dr E M Abdussamad, Principal Scientist of CMFRI who led the study, in a statement. Studies have shown that the spawning stock biomass of sardines along the Kerala coast is meagre. Hence, indiscriminate fishing in this period would be disastrous for the future of the species.

The findings have been relayed to state fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma. Barring a slight increase in the fish's catch in 2017, there has been a general decline of oil sardines along Kerala. In fact, the catch last year — 44,320t — was the lowest in the last two decades. According to CMFRI, unfavourable conditions in the ocean ecosystem following the phenomenon of El Nino led to fluctuations in the yield of oil sardine. Oil sardine, known as 'matthi' in Malayalam, is Kerala's fish favourite variety and integral to the cuisine of the state as well as to the livelihood of the state's fishers. Last year, a decline of 39% in the catch of the fish was reported with the Indian mackerel displacing the oil sardine at the top of fish landings in the state.

Kerala: Fishing community asks Centre to safeguard the interests of fishing sector

https://krishijagran.com/agriculture-world/kerala-fishing-community-asks-centre-to-safeguard-the-interests-of-fishing-sector/

"Considering the Indian Ports Act Bill 2020 in Parliament, the Kerala fishing community has urged the Centre to safeguard the interests of the fishing sector. The new Bill is intended to establish ports vis-a-vis foreign commerce and goods traffic. However, the community has requested a pivotal role in the Bill to ensure maximum utilisation of the coastal line in the region, in view of the considerable foreign exchange it earns the exchequer. The helping hand of TAMP The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, submitting its comments on the draft bill, said that fisherfolk could take their complaints to the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP) for a fair deal before the enactment of various port acts. For instance, in lowering jetty fees to a fair level where other departments declined to pass favorable orders, there were times when TAMP was helpful.

However, Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of the Association, said that the new Act that is to be enforced soon is meant to hold TAMP away and the fishermen's complaints will be swept aside. In favor of the industry, the government should incorporate certain clauses in the proposed Act when implementing fees and penalties, he added. Since 1950, small jetties coming under the Cochin Port Trust have been used as seafaring, fish landing, and boat repair yards. These jetties were originally run free of charge with the help of local residents. A fee of Rs.100 was consequently charged annually by the port, which increased in 1998 to Rs. 1,200. The number was further increased to around 1,12,000 in 2013. While the sector could secure a temporary stay on the rise in fees from the Kerala High Court, such increases in jetty fees are a disincentive for fishermen to venture into the sea, he said. Those writing the Act may be

unaware of the realities of the ground faced by the fishing industry, which provides 75,000 families with a livelihood. The Association looks forward to a systematic Act to promote the livelihood opportunities of the fishing community, he added, and urged the authorities to include agencies such as the TAMP in the Act to resolve the community's grievances.

Kerala: 'Proposed Indian Ports Act 2020 should net benefits for fishermen'

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/proposed-indian-ports-act-2020-should-net-benefits-for-fishermen/article33435452.ece

"Kerala's fishing community has requested the Centre to safeguard the interest of the fishing sector while considering the Indian Ports Act Bill 2020 in Parliament. The proposed Bill is aimed at development of ports vis-a- vis international trade and traffic of goods. However, the community has demanded a pivotal role in the Bill to ensure optimum utilisation of the coastal line in the country, in view of the substantial foreign exchange it earns the exchequer. All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association TAMP's helping hand, Submitting its comments on the draft Bill, the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association said that prior to enactment of various port Acts, fisherfolk could take their grievances to the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP), for a fair deal. There were instances when TAMP had been helpful, for instance in reducing jetty fees to a reasonable level when other departments refused to pass favourable orders. However, the new Act that is going to be enacted soon is intended to keep away TAMP and the grievances of the fisherfolk would be brushed aside, said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of the Association. The government should include some provisions in the proposed Act in favour of the sector, while imposing fees and penalties, he said. Soon, ports sector to have CCI-like body to settle disputes Small jetties that come under the Cochin Port Trust are being used as seafaring, fish landing, and boat repairing yards since 1950. Initially these jetties were operated free of cost with the assistance of local people. Subsequently, a fee of ?100 was levied annually by the port, which rose to ?1,200 in 1998. However, the amount was further raised in 2013 to ?1,12,000. Though the sector could obtain an interim stay from the Kerala High Court on the increase in fees, such enhancements in jetty fees are a deterrent for fishermen to venture into the sea, he said. Those drafting the Act may be ignorant of the ground realities faced by the fishing sector, which is a source of livelihood for 75,000 families. The Association is looking forward to a comprehensive Act to support the fishing community's the livelihood opportunities, he said, and urged the authorities to involve agencies such as the TAMP in the Act to address the grievances of the community.

Kerala: Firm to market seaweed products developed by CIFT

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/dec/24/firm-to-market-seaweed-products-developed-by-cift-2240409.html

"Bodhina Naturals, a Kochi based private ayurveda research firm will manufacture and market seaweed based nutraceuticals and sanitizers developed by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), a public sector research organisation in the harvest and post-harvest fisheries sector. The research team led by CIFT principal scientist Suseela Mathew comprised of Niladri Chatterjee, R Anandan and Vishnuvinayagam was instrumental for the development of four seaweed based products in collaboration with M/s Bodina Naturals. Bodhina Naturals, headed by Boby Kizhakethara and Divya Boby, is involved in research activities for developing ayurvedic formulations. "Seaweeds are good source of anti-oxidants, dietary fiber, essential amino acids, phytochemicals, vitamins, and minerals. Bioactive compounds present in seaweeds have health promoting properties like anti-diabetic, anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, dyslipidemia, bone-health, heart-health and mental-health benefits. It is found that seaweeds along the Indian coastline have immense nutritional potential, said CIFT director C N Ravishankar. "Bodina is entering into the manufacturing and trade of sea food derivatives. The company expects an annual business turnover of Rs 4 crore in the sector, said Boby Kizhakethara. The products Zafora-360 enriched fucoidan capsules have been developed from brown seaweed Sargassum.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: New technology playing savior to fishermen: Shakya

http://www.uniindia.com/~/new-technology-playing-savior-to-fishermen-shakya/India/news/2271851.html

"The advent of new technology, especially the digitised applications and services launched by the Government, have given the fishermen, especially those residing in the coastal areas of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, a sense of security, as they keep the fishermen alert and also help them during distress times at the sea. These views were expressed by R Shakya, Deputy Director General (Satellite), Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, while participating in the virtual summit on 'Criticality of Transforming Fisheries Industry: Ushering Digitization to Support PMMSY,' organised by India's premier news agency, United News of India, here on Tuesday. Talking about the new-age technologies, Mr Shakya mentioned the NavIC Messaging Receivers (NMR), which is an indigenous system, developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Ahmedabad. The system sends alert messages regarding Cyclones, High Waves and Tsunami to the fishermen on their mobile phones in native languages, using Bluetooth, he said.

It also warns them about international boundaries and gives detailed information on potential fishing zones, added the DDG. Talking about other applications, Mr Shakya listed the Distress

Alert Transmitter (DAT), Second Generation Distress Alert Transmitter (2G-DAT), 2 Way Vessel Tracking Terminal, MSS Satellite Phone and VSAT Link as the new-age helpers of the fishermen. Giving details, he said DAT is an INSAT-based battery operated transmitter, which is developed for 'NAVIKA' community. In case of emergency, DAT transmits an emergency message, which consists of the boat's ID, it's location, type of distress and time information. The DAT transmits the information to INSAT-3A satellite, which relays the signal to the Indian Coast Guard in Chennai for rescue operation, added Mr Shakya. The technologies are not only used by the fishermen community, but even the Defence personnel at the borders make use of these for easy and smooth communication at remote corners of the country.

Kerala: Is it too late to save marine livelihoods in Kerala from climate change?

https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2020/12/climate-change-in-kerala-and-marine-livelihoods/

"The state of Kerala is situated along the south-west coast of India. It stretches along the Arabian Sea and is separated from the rest of the sub-continent by the steep Western Ghats. Kerala has a 580-kilometre-long coastal line and these coasts cover around 10-15% of its total area. Almost 222 fishing villages depend on this marine coast in terms of livelihood. Oceans have had an influence on the history of the state and people's way of life in Kerala since ancient times. Trade, through sea, was seen even in earlier centuries of the first millennium BC. Kerala has had frequent maritime interactions with the regions around Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Agriculture is considered the main source of livelihood in the state. However, marine fisheries and trade has also been a major sector of livelihood and economy since ancient times. In short, one may say that the economy of Kerala is based primarily on agriculture and marine products. Kerala has a unique development track and been ranked first in the UNDP's ranking of states, the Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index for India's States, UNDP, 2019.

Fisheries have a major role in the unparalleled development trajectory of Kerala. The UNDP Human Development Report, 2007-08, shows that developing nations near the equator are much more vulnerable to a rise in the sea level. This means that coastal areas in India are more vulnerable to a sea-level rise. The role of climate change is more clear in this scenario and if it is left unchecked, it will severely affect those who are living near the sea and depending on the sea. Climate Change In Kerala Climate change in Kerala has caused a variety of impacts on agriculture, human health, biodiversity, coastal areas and water crisis, and vary from region to region. Kerala's ecosystem is a closed and fragile one. The emission rate of CO2 and other greenhouse gases in the state is comparatively low. However, the shifting pattern of monsoon over the last decade is enough to prove the role of climate change in Kerala. The Arabian Sea on the western border of Kerala is getting severely affected by climate change and global warming. From 1904 to 1994, an increase in temperature by 0.5°C was observed on the surface

of the Arabian Sea. Since 1995, the increase has been unprecedented. There is ample evidence to show that the increase in surface-level temperature of the Arabian sea is due to the influence of carbon-related global warming and climatic change. A study conducted by ITM (Institute of Tropical Meteorology), Pune, on the increase in temperature between 1901 and 2007 in the north of Kerala (Calicut region) and the south of Kerala (Thiruvananthapuram region) asserts that there has been an increase in the annual average temperature of these regions in the last 100 years. The average annual temperature in the north has increased by 1.02°C and in the south, it is 1°C.

The increase in temperature during the last three decades is almost 0.4°C. Statistics by the Indian Meteorological Department indicates that there has been an increase in temperatures by 0.64°C over the last five decades across seven centres in Kerala. The increase in global temperature in the last five decades has been 0.7°C. This shows that the increase in the temperature level in Kerala has a similar pattern as that of the global increase in temperature. In the case of rainfall pattern, there was a decline in rainfall from 1901 to 2007. The changes in rainfall along the western coast of Kerala has increased by 6-8% in the past five decades. The flood that occurred in 2018 in Kerala was an outcome of this increase in rainfall. By 2030, an increase of 8% can be expected in the months of June, July and August, and 19% the decrease in rainfall is expected in the months of November, December and January. Climate Change And The Vanishing Coast The change in physical ocean parameters, such as seawater temperature and current flows affect the number of marine fishes and the distribution of marine fish stocks. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says that as sea temperature changes, the quantity of fish will change and the fish will move to different areas some species would go extinct in particular areas, while some predators and prey in the food chain would move to different areas.

This would lead to a disruption in food chains. Wetlands and other low lying habitats where fish reproduce will be drowned by the rising sea and the inconstant weather may stop fishers from going to the sea altogether (Adger et al., 2003). The shifting pattern of EL Nino, due to climate change and the degradation of mangrove forest along the coastline, is a major threat to the marine environment of Kerala. The western side of the Arabian Sea is most vulnerable to cyclones. However, climate change, in the recent decades, has made the eastern part of Arabian sea vulnerable to cyclones as well. The Ockhi cyclone, which happened in 2017 on the southern districts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, bears witness. Migration of fish species, the degradation of many marine ecosystems and the disappearance of the Ridley Turtle's breeding sands were the aftermath of this cyclone. In Kerala, most of the fishing communities use the direction of wind, waves and the sight of flock birds for fishing. They observe nature and this traditional and local knowledge has given a strong foundation for the sustainability of their livelihoods. They are familiar with paru (rocky reefs) under the sea and the ecosystem present there. A change in climate can shift the pattern of wind and waves and the route of migratory

birds. Nowadays, unpredicted climate can lead to the cyclones that gobble up coasts, houses and numerous species of fish, disrupting the existing ecosystems by newly migrated species. These unpredictable events have made a severe impact on marine ecosystems, nature and commercial fisheries. In Kerala, most of the artisanal fishers are extremely poor, and socially as well as politically marginalised communities. Their capacity to adapt is poor and the small-scale (often migrant) fishers are highly vulnerable to climate impacts.

This leads to a situation where fisher communities are suffering in terms of their income and social standards. Due to climate change, vulnerability has emerged in the community. Vulnerability, as defined by IPCC, is a condition where the internal ability to cope, recover and adapt to climate stress lacks. According to the IPCC 2001, "vulnerability is the extent to which climate change may damage or harm a system it depends not only a system's sensitivity but also its ability to adapt to new climatic conditions. The major impacts of climate change in marine fisheries are the changes in habitat brought about by the rise in sea-level, the frequency of extreme events such as cyclones, erratic catch and erratic revenue. Marine livelihoods are always the most affected by climate change. The strategies used to 'combat' climate change are technology gimmicks they're costly and do not take into account the vulnerabilities of the fishing community in Kerala. These methods create uncertainties in the ecology as well as livelihoods, and cast doubts on oft-proven data. This doesn't pave recovery channels for these fishing communities. This keeps them locked in their contexts of vulnerability. The long term impacts of climate change on marine livelihoods have not been realised yet, to the horrifying extents they can be. Improvement in the primary stakeholder's awareness by involving them in disaster-preparedness, management and mitigation planning can resolve these problems to an extent.

Kerala: After Aditya's success, NavAlt to venture into fishing and defence

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/dec/15/after-adityas-success-navalt-to-venture-into-fishing-and-defence-2236166.html

"Close on the heels of winning a global honour for 'Aditya', India's first solar-powered ferry, its Kochi-based manufacturer, NavAlt Solar and Electric Boats, has already set its sight on uncharted territories. With two upcoming landmark projects, NavAlt boats will be foraying into the fishing sector and defence industry for the first time. In association with Shell Foundation, a solar fishing boat will be built to empower small and medium fishers. In alliance with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (a government initiative under the Ministry of Defence), a 10-passenger high-speed solar-powered ferry will be created from the scratch. The promising maritime projects were recently inaugurated by Emmanuel Lenain, French Ambassador to India. With its innovative, green ferries, NavAlt had already established a name for itself in the commercial space. By charting inroads in the fishing sector, the naval architects

will be vying for social impact. “A few years ago, we had carried out a few pilot projects in Gujarat for fishermen with 30-foot-long boats by trying to convert their petrol engines into solar. While we tried retrofitting them, we learnt it wasn't effective. This, however, helped us comprehend their functional needs.

Along with Shell, we'll be building five boats for now which will be given to a fishing cluster in Ernakulam as a demonstration. Ideally, the project was to commence in March but got delayed due to the pandemic. The first two boats will be ready by June 2021, said Sandith Thandasherry, founder and CEO, NavAlt Solar and Electric Boats. Currently, small fishermen employ boats which consume 15 to 20 litres of subsidised fuel and requires nearly Rs 10,000 as maintenance cost per year. “The idea is to save at least Rs 2 lakh in fuel and thereby have their returns on investment under five years, assuming there is no government support. However, the latter comes into play only when we have adoption and scale in the second phase. Once the fishermen are convinced with the working of the first five boats, we will launch 100 more boats, added Sandith. The second boat will be India's fastest solar electric catamaran boat which can travel at the speed of 12 knots (double the speed of ‘Aditya'), reducing travel time from 90 minutes to 30 minutes. “The sea-going vessel is significant as a technology demonstrator for the defence sector. While normally, inland vessels do not operate in monsoon, our solar vessel can. Typically, the defence sector wouldn't consider solar or electric as their field. Our boat is a demonstration to prove that their vessels can have electric propulsion and save fuel. It will be docked in the Ministry of Defence shipyard in Mumbai and traverse 10km between MDL main unit to MDL Nhava unit, explained Sandith.While the solar fishing boat can improve the livelihood of small fishers, eliminate carbon emissions and avoid sea pollution, the solar catamaran for defence is sophisticated in terms of performance, needs and technology. “We want to be leaders in this space through this demonstration, he said. Impactful, powerful While the solar fishing boat can improve the livelihood of small fishers, eliminate carbon emissions and avoid sea pollution, the solar catamaran for defence has sophisticated technology.

Kerala: Clam collectors facing uncertain future

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/clam-collectors-facing-uncertain-future/article33312232.ece

"With the annual ban on harvesting in force and anxious over the upcoming season due to the decline in stock, the clam collectors of Ashtamudi are staring at a shaky future. While many of them will be struggling for survival till the ban ends, they seem more distraught over the possibility of a dry season. According to fishers, the normal estuarine ecosystem has been steadily changing over the years, posing a serious threat to their livelihood. “Be it fish or clam, there has been a considerable dip in catch. During the breeding season female clams lay lakhs

of eggs, but there are some factors, including salinity, temperature and pollution, that affect the breeding, says Murguan from Dalavapuram. In early 2020, clam collectors had spotted an invasive bivalve species that easily colonised the creeks of Ashtamudi. “This mussel leaves no space for native species to settle and we feel that this can make breeding very difficult. We feel very apprehensive about what awaits us after the ban, he says. B. Yesudas, president, Clam Collector's Union, says boats using illegal and unscientific methods are responsible for the dip in stock, while traditional clam collectors are left to face the music.

“It is not possible for manual collectors to exhaust the stock and individuals diving into the water can hardly damage the clam bed. The practice of 'kuthi vali' is the reason as they use large boats and pulleys to harvest the clams, he says. In the process, collectors usually plough through the clam bed sweeping everything, including juvenile clams. “Though illegal, the practice is rampant in many parts and is responsible for the decline in spawner population, he says. Sustainable development In a bid to replenish the clam stock and promote sustainable development of resources, the Fisheries Department had set up sanctuaries in Ashtamudi. The protected sites had helped the clams to multiply and according to fishers, provided livelihood for many during the pandemic. The initiative was launched as part of a comprehensive project to revive inland fisheries sector and the sites were decided after checking various parameters. “Locating the sites suitable for clam relaying requires time. The project will be continued after rechecking a number of factors in the habitat, says an official.

"The small **Kerala: After Ockhi, every cyclone alert disrupts livelihood for residents in Kerala’s Poonthura**

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/after-ockhi-every-cyclone-alert-disrupts-livelihood-residents-kerala-s-poonthura-139023

busy market, children playing in the streets, shops open, some men taking an afternoon siesta on the St Thomas Church premises… from the outside, it's just any other day in Poonthura, a coastal village located nine kilometers from Kerala's capital city of Thiruvananthapuram. But life has not been normal for the village ever since Cyclone Ockhi hit it in November 2017, in which 35 fishermen lost their lives. Even a minor adverse weather condition leaves the residents sleepless. “It's a like a panic attack, mounting tension and fear, with no way to stay calm, says Alex Mary. Her house is 50 meters from the church and a stone's throw from the sea. Whenever there is any weather warning, there is an alert sent from the local police station and through the church. This in turn disrupts the villagers' lives as it means loss of work and the coastal region becomes more vulnerable. “We never used to fear the weather changes as we are the children of the sea, we always felt that we'd seen much. But after Ockhi, life has changed forever, says Andrews, a fisherman. Kerala was bracing for Cyclone Burevi as the state was predicted to be on its landfall track path. The coastal people have had sleepless nights again for

the past many days. “While leaving for fishing, my husband now tells me that we might not meet again and it could be his last meal with me, such is his fear. It has been a complete change since Ockhi, Mini, wife of fisherman Rapson, says. Mini's sister Selvi's husband Edward went missing during Ockhi and was never found. Selvi and Edward have four daughters. Their youngest, Nimisha, was 1.5 years old when Edward went missing.

“Because of the Burevi alert, it's been a week since my husband has gone to work. After Ockhi, the fishermen are scared to go fishing. Any alert for a natural disaster that keeps our men from work means starvation for us coastal people, Mini says. “For anything that requires a fair amount of money, we need to take loans from private banks which charge high interest rates. Not having work for a week affects the loan repayment too. Once the bank people came and sat here when we defaulted for a month. I had to pledge my gold earrings to repay the money. So every cyclone warning is a blow to our livelihood, apart from the worry of losing our lives itself, Mini says. Saroja, Mini's sister-in-law, nods in agreement. Her 55-year-old husband battles fear every time he goes to sea ever since Ockhi hit the village. “He began fishing when he was 18 and was never afraid. Now he says ‘let God take care of me' when he leaves for work, Saroja says. While the men abstain from fishing during adverse weather conditions, it's a loss of income for the women too, many of who work as fish vendors. Saroja is also a fish vendor. She buys fish from the fishing boats and sells door to door and in markets in the city areas. If there is a cyclone alert, Saroja is jobless for a week. Another major concern of the fishing community is the sharp decline in the availability of fish. “Outsiders say that when the fishing community gets a good catch of fish, they'll be able to manage for a month or more with that. How is that even possible? Getting a good catch at times and having no work at all often like this? How many days are we supposed to live with the money we earned from a good catch? We have lived here since our birth, we'll not be able to survive anywhere else, she says. Thresite, a 60-year-old fish vendor, has also been jobless since the alert.

“It's been a week since we got the alert through the church. Opposite our house is a river and on the other side is the sea. Any cyclone alert means fear for our lives, Thresite's neighbour Vasantha says. Their houses are only 10 meters apart, while some are built adjacent to each other. The state government had announced Rs 10 lakh as compensation, Rs 6 lakh for buying land and the rest for building a house, for the families of Ockhi victims. “The amount is for buying three cents of land… where will we get three cents of land for Rs 6 lakh when the land prices are soaring? asks Mini, who along with her sister Selvi has been trying to buy some land with the compensation amount. “We live each day with the money we earn that day. We don't have any savings, none of us are government employees or have family members working abroad, Dennisya, another of Thresite's neighbours, says. Ever since Ockhi, parents don't allow their young sons to go fishing, which was natural for men above 18 to do in the past. “My husband Yohannan still goes for work, but we don't allow our 22-year-old son Aabin to go into the sea. My husband would say – let me die in a cyclone or in rough seas, but let my son be

alive, Alex Mary says. Alex Mary's family of five lives in a small house while Mini's family of 10, including Selvi and her four kids, lives in a two-bedroom house.

“We don't want to lose our children, we would rather starve, says Saroja. Many of the families that wanted to educate their children so they don't become fishermen or fish vendors had to take education loans. This in turn has also added to their financial burden as not all children could get a job after finishing their studies. People like Elisha and her husband Selvan run a petty shop in the small living room of their home while some men and women began working as daily wage labourers and domestic workers in the city. My husband was part of the fishermen's rescue team during the 2018 floods. But these cyclone alerts keep him also at home at regular intervals. We had to find an alternate income to keep life moving, Elisha says.

Kerala: Covid curbs and weather warnings pile on agony of fishers

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/dec/06/covid-curbs-and-weather-warnings-pile-on-agony-of-fishers-2232412.html

"“It has been a week since we went to sea. The Covid restrictions and weather warnings have forced us to live in penury. We are unable to even pay interest for the loans we took to purchase boats and fishing gear. Besides, the prices of fish have declined and our livelihood is in danger, lamented Liju, a fisherman in Chellanam. Traditional fishermen and mechanised boat workers blame weather forecasters for issuing a week-long rough sea warning in view of Cyclone Burevi. Many of the youths in Chellanam, who used to work as masons and construction labourers, have returned to their traditional occupation as all other work has been stalled. “This has led to an increase in the number of fishermen, causing a drop in the earnings per head. Now, we barely make `500 a day, said Liju. “Cyclone Burevi did not even enter the Arabian Sea. Since Ockhi, the Met department has been issuing blanket warnings, disrupting fishing activities across the state, even for minor weather events.

We need more accurate weather forecasting, said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary, All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association (AKFBOA). ‘Suffered losses worth L8,000 crore' Fishing activities were banned in April and restricted in May. “We were planning to resume fishing on August 1 after the two-month trawl ban when the weather forecasters banned fishing for 13 days in the name of the cyclone. After that, we were allowed to venture into sea only on alternate days. We have lost 59 work days since August 1 and have suffered losses worth `8,000 crore, he said. According to Kerala Traditional Fishermen Association president P V Janardhanan, most fishermen families are surviving on the food kit provided by the government. “A few fishermen at Malippuram and Chappa villages were slapped fines of `5,000 and `10,000 for violating the weather warning. They were forced to go for fishing due to grinding poverty and were mercilessly fined by the fisheries department. What should we do? asked P B Dayanandan, secretary of the organisation.Meanwhile,

AKFBOA has submitted a memorandum to the chief minister seeking to waive licence fee for the year in view of the crisis.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: Cyclone Burevi weakens into deep depression

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/cyclone-burevi-live-updates-storm-weakens-into-deep-depression-tamil-nadu-kerala-airports-shut-11607056118869.html

"The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that the cyclonic storm Burevi has weakened into a deep depression is inching closer to the Tamil Nadu and Kerala coast on 4 December. Deep depression is a stage of cyclone formation or de-intensification. Southern Tamil Nadu and neighbouring Kerala are on high alert as the weather bureau had earlier predicted that Burevi would hit the southern shores as a cyclonic storm. Here are the Latest Updates on Cyclone Burevi: - Latest IMD bulletin - Deep Depression over Gulf of Mannar at 0530 IST today is close to Ramanathapuram District coast remained practically stationary, about 40 km southwest of Ramanathapuram, 70 km west-southwest of Pamban . - - The associated wind speed is about 55-65 gusting to 75 kmph. - IMD issues no.3 hazard warning at Pamban port - The met department has issued a number three hazard warning sign at the Pamban port due to strong winds blowing at a speed of 55 kmph over the coast. - Flight operations shut - Flights operations have been suspended till 12 pm today in Madurai and Tuticorin airport. The flight operations will also remain suspended at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport from 10 am to 6 pm on Friday. - Kerala declares public holiday in 5 districts –

The Government of Kerala has declared a holiday in five districts for today. A statement issued by the state government said a public holiday has been declared for the districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki in Kerala. - Strong winds hit Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram - Visuals from Rameswaram in Tamil Nadu as strong winds hit the region; sea turns rough. - Heavy rains predicted - Heavy rainfall has been predicted in several places under the deep depression, including Toothukudi, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Cuddalore, Puducherry and neighbouring areas for the next six hours on Friday. - Disaster relief teams on standby - Diving and disaster relief teams of the Indian Navy and the National Disaster Response Force continue to be on standby to render necessary support to the administration. Two Indian Navy ships and four Indian Navy aircraft were deployed for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief assistance and warn fishermen at the west coast of

the sea. - Kerala CM holds high-level meeting - In view of the high alert issued for cyclonic storm Burevi, a high-level meeting was held with representatives of armed forces, Coast Guard, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), various department heads, DGP and Chief Secretary, said Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. The situation was assessed and strategy was evaluated in the meeting. - Schools in Puducherry to remain shut - The government and private schools in Puducherry will remain closed today due to continuous rains triggered by Cyclone Burevi. - Amit Shah assures all possible help - Union Home Minister Amit Shah spoke to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami and his counterpart in Kerala Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday and assured them of all possible help to the people of both the states.

Kerala: Cyclone Burevi: Sea of worries for fisherfolk

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/dec/04/cyclone-burevi-sea-of-worries-for-fisherfolk-2231430.html

"Adverse weather conditions and incessant cyclone threats continue to disrupt the daily lives of fisherfolk in the district. While the ban on fishing activities ahead of Cyclone Burevi has left them in the lurch, a plethora of worries -- ranging from drinking water shortage to lack of housing and means of livelihood and survival -- surround fishers At a time when the entire coastal belt in the capital is bracing for Cyclone Burevi, 62-year-old Annakutty from Valiyathura is struggking to shake off the trauma of Cyclone Ockhi which ravaged her life and the Kerala coast nearly three years ago. Ockhi, which claimed the lives of 143 fishermen in the state, left a lasting impact on fisherfolk. “My husband was left stranded in the sea when the cyclone came and he never returned, says Annakutty. Ever since the tragedy, her life has been miserable. Though the state government has come up with a relief package, a large number of affected families are yet to get the benefits. “The government is yet to hand over B20 lakh announced for the families of those who lost their lives during Ockhi. This relief fund is mobilised through contributions from kind-hearted people but the government has only given us the interest obtained.

I get B3,500 every month from the state treasury which is insufficient. My application for pension was also rejected as I couldn't procure the death certificate of my husband whose body was never recovered, says Annakutty, whose son is yet to get the job promised by the government. Like Annakutty, there are 91 other families whose loved ones went missing in the sea during Ockhi. Only 53 out of the total 143 fishermen who ventured into the sea were reportedly recovered. - A fisherman taking a nap in a fishing boat at Vizhinjam. - With the MET Department issuing a cyclone warning, all fishing activities have come to a standstill, Lives continue to be miserable at the existing relief camps where displaced families of Valiyathura reside. - The ban on fishing activities has come as a huge blow to many families.

Several families at the camp are more concerned about the lack of food and water than the incessant cyclone alerts. Many don't prefer lives at the camp with hardly any space to move around Water everywhere, not a drop to drink Fifty-two-year-old Rubel J, who was seen quarrelling with a friend near her battered home in Valiyathura, is irked not because of the cyclone threat but because of the lack of drinking water. “I've lived near the sea all my life and the storm alerts are a daily affair now. Currently, we have no water supply. The authorities have restricted us from venturing into the sea which equates to zero food supply, she says. The prohibition order on fishing has come as a huge blow to the displaced families residing at the relief camp at Valiyathura UP school. Sixty-four-year-old Jacinta and her family have been residing there for the past four years. “This is our fifth year in this camp. We are surviving on an insufficient ration, she says. “My son is the sole breadwinner of this family and for the past three days he couldn't go fishing because of the ban, says Jacinta, who used to live at a rented home which was destroyed in sea erosion in 2016. “My bedridden husband passed away in the camp. But I haven't been rehabilitated yet as I didn't own the previous house, as per the authorities. Also, I've been given the white APL card as I was told the yellow card was unavailable. For the past two years I have been trying to get my name removed from the APL list so that my family gets more benefits, she adds.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: Awaiting the storm

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/dec/02/awaiting-the-storm-2230553.html

"Less than a week after Cyclone Nivar battered Tamil Nadu, another one, Cyclone Buveri, is expected to hit Kerala and Tamil Nadu.The cyclone warning has created a fresh set of challenges for the authorities who were engaged in poll preparations amid Covid-19.Authorities are rushing to complete the groundwork, such as pruning trees and setting up evacuation plans for the families in landslide-prone areas and coastal belts. The IMD issuing a warning for yet another cyclone, one similar to Cyclone Ockhi, has raised concern among the district authorities who were busy prepping for the conduct of a smooth and fair local body election amid the pandemic. Ensuring cyclone preparedness without hindering poll arrangements is a daunting task for authorities. According to officials, most of the camps identified for relocating evacuated families during disasters are now polling stations. As a result, village officers have been asked to find alternate locations including private educational institutions and marriage halls for shifting families. As per the prediction, the depression formed over the Bay of Bengal on Monday is highly likely to intensify and progress to a cyclonic storm triggering heavy rain in Kerala. The storm is anticipated to cross Sri Lanka and make landfall at Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday morning.

Not an ordinary cyclone An official of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority

(KSDMA) said the cyclone may trigger heavy rains and high-speed winds in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam. “This is not a typical cyclone. After making landfall in Sri Lanka, the storm may gain more strength. We are yet to have clarity on the path of the cyclone after it hits the Kanyakumari coast. While the cyclone is similar to Ockhi and may not enter the state, Thiruvananthapuram is inclined to receive heavy rain and wind. Based on forecast variations, the wind speed will be calculated later. Currently, we have to prepare for the worst, said the official. According to experts, the heavy rain could cause flooding in the city limits and high alerts should be issued in the eastern region of the district where the hilly areas lie. The state has prohibited all fishing activities in the wake of the cyclone alert. “We have sought the help of coastal police and fisheries department to ensure the safe return of fishermen who have gone for deep-sea fishing. Alerts have been issued a day in advance and we hope those who had left earlier return home safely, the official added. Rain warning by IMD (as per December 1) An orange alert has been issued in the southern and northern districts on Wednesday with IMD predicting heavy to very heavy rain at isolated places. A red alert has been issued in the southern districts on Thursday predicting heavy to very heavy rain at a few places and extremely heavy rain at isolated places. An orange and yellow alert have been issued in southern and northern districts, respectively.

Kerala: IMD issues red alert to three districts in Kerala ahead of developing cyclone Burevi

https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/imd-issues-red-alert-to-three-districts-in-kerala-ahead-of-developing-cyclone-burevi.html

"Just a week after Cyclone Nirav, another brewing cyclone in the southeast region of the Bay of Bengal has forced the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) to issue a red alert in three districts of Kerala. With the state likely to receive heavy rains from Tuesday, the KDSMA has sounded a red alert in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha districts until December 3. The depression which is most likely to develop into Cyclone Burevi is expected to intensify and cross Sri Lanka around December 2. Meanwhile, red alerts have been issued to southern districts of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry as well. The southern states including parts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, and Alappuzha districts have been warned of heavy rains until December 3. Kerala has also banned all fishing activities starting Monday midnight until further notice. Authorities have asked all those out fishing in the sea to get back to the nearest coastal zone. It is very likely to intensify further into a deep depression during the next 24 hours. It is also likely to intensify further into a cyclonic storm. It is very likely to move west-northwestwards and cross the Sri Lanka coast around the evening of December 2,"" the IMD said in a statement on Monday. Cyclone Nivar wreaks havoc Last week, ""very severe cyclonic storm"" Nivar had hit Tamil Nadu.

About 2.5 lakh people were housed in cyclone shelters in the state as part of safety measures. The Centre on Friday pledged all support to cyclone Nivar-affected Tamil Nadu with both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister K Palniswami announcing relief to the kin of those killed. Nivar which wreaked havoc in 18 districts of the state has claimed four lives besides leaving several cattle dead and over 2,000 trees uprooted, Palaniswami said, a day after the very severe storm made landfall. Palaniswami announced Rs 10 lakh each to the families of the victims. The cyclone had crossed the coast between Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on Thursday morning but spared the state of very large scale destruction as witnessed during the Gaja cyclone two years ago that crossed the coast between Nagapattinam and Vedaranyam in the south. Apart from uprooting 2,064 trees in the affected districts, including Chennai, Cuddalore, Chengalpattu, Vellore and Nagapattinam, it caused damage to about 108 power transformers and over 2,927 electric poles.

India: Rains likely in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, coastal Andhra Pradesh; Low pressure to become depression soon

https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/rains-likely-in-tamil-nadu-kerala-coastal-andhra-pradesh-low-pressure-to-become-depression-soon-921414.html

"A well-marked low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal is very likely to concentrate into a depression on Monday and bring moderate to heavy and extremely heavy rainfall over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next four days, the IMD said. Tamil Nadu Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar said in view of the forecast, steps have been taken by the government for the safe return of 200 plus Tamil Nadu boats -engaged in deep sea fishing- with the help of Coast Guard, who have also been provided with the location of the vessels. Of the total 218 boats, eight have returned safely, he said. Authorities in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Lakshadweep have been requested to allow Tamil Nadu boats in their fishing harbours and to render them assistance, the Minister said. The low pressure area on Saturday over south Andaman sea and adjoining areas of southeast Bay of Bengal has organised into a well marked low pressure area, the Regional Meteorological Centre here said. An updated RMC bulletin said the well-marked low-pressure area ""is very likely to concentrate into a depression during next 24 hours and likely to intensify further thereaer. It is likely to move west northwestwards and reach near south Tamil Nadu coast around December 2."" Under the influence of the system, light to moderate rainfall or thundershower is likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal starting from Sunday and it could continue upto December 3 in the state and till December 1 in the regions falling under the union territory.

The showers, in such regions, starting with isolated places, could extend to many areas and then spread to most places during the next four days, the bulletin said. On December 1, heavy to very heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places over Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and

Kanyakumari districts. The next day, southern districts including Tirunelvei and Ramanathapuram could experience extremely heavy showers and the following day, heavy rainfall is likely over the same regions. The IMD tweeted, ""Scattered to widespread rainfall activity very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Karaikal, Kerala & Mahe, Lakshadweep, south coastal Andhra Pradesh and south Rayalaseema during 01st-03rd December, 2020."" Also, the department said, ""Isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall with moderate thunderstorm & lightning very likely over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Karaikal during December 1-3 and isolated extremely rainfall likely over south Tamil Nadu and south Kerala on 02nd December 2020."" In Kerala, a red alert has been sounded for Idukki district on Wednesday and fishermen restrained from putting out to sea from the midnight of November 30. An Orange alert has been issued for Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts on December 2 anda yellow alert for Alappuzha, Kottayam and Ernakulam districts on the same day. Red alert indicates heavy to very heavy rainfall of over 20 cm in 24 hours,an Orange alert (6 cm to 20 cm) and yellow alert (6-11 cm). Jayakumar said a virtual meeting of fisheries oicials of south Tamil Nadu was held and they were also advised to contact the fishermen involved in deep sea fishing through means like satellite phones to coordinate their safe return to nearest locations. Control rooms at Kanyakumari and Tuticorin districts (04651-226235 and 04612320458 respectively) and at the headquarters here (044-29530392) are functional 24 x 7, the Minister said in a statement.

Kerala: Radio Kadal gives voice to the fisherfolk in capital

https://www.thehindu.com/society/radio-kadal-a-community-radio-service-of-fisherfolk-in-thiruvananthapuram/article33200008.ece

"That is how James Pethiru starts his Tamil kathaprasangam (story-telling performance). Apparently, nemmeen (seer fish) proposes marriage to velameen (white snapper) only to be declined by the latter. To know what happens next, tune in to the YouTube/Facebook page of Coastal Students' Cultural Forum (CSCF), an NGO working with youth and children of fishing villages in Thiruvananthapuram. James' performance is among the many uploaded by CSCF for its community radio, Radio Kadal. As its tagline says, ‘kelkkaam, kaathu niraye kadal chethangal' (listen to voices from the sea), Radio Kadal, officially launched in August this year, is by, of and for the fishing community in the district. “Fisherfolk in Thiruvananthapuram are an indigenous group. Besides following traditional fishing methods, they have their own language, dialects, proverbs, songs, stories, celebrations, games. But none of this has been documented or recorded and this channel is a platform to do that, says Vipindas, secretary, CSCF. He adds that there is “an identity crisis due to which the fisherfolk feel alienated from the rest of society. “Their minds have been fashioned to think so. Although the fishermen are hailed as Kerala's own ‘army' after they rescued lives during the Kerala floods, not much has been done till date to understand their culture or indigenous knowledge. We wanted to do

something to make them proud of who they are.

Since radio is a medium that can easily connect with the common man, we decided to have our own channel. As it will take some more time to get the licence and frequency, we are currently uploading programmes on our page, he says. Once the infrastructure is ready, the team plans to cover a 30-kilometre radius extending from Pozhiyoor to Adimalathura. Johnson Jament, mentor and advisor of CSCF put forward the idea. And, they found inspiration in Radio Mattoli, a community radio service in Wayanad for farmers and tribal communities. Song of the ocean "James, a traditional fisherman from Puthiyathura, regales listeners with stories and kadalpaattukal (sea songs). He is among the many fishermen who have a wealth of information about the sea and marine life, having lived in close communion with it. These elders, whom we also call chelalikal, teach us songs, fishing methods they adopt, about varieties of fish and more, says Vipin. Topics featured on the channel include games that once used to be popular in the coastal belt. They have also uploaded segments on achievers from the region and those who have contributed to the development of the community. "Even as we feature cultural diversity of the community, listeners also get to know of issues the residents face, especially due to the pandemic. We have had traditional fish-sellers, both men and women, talking about their struggles and children opening up about online learning. In one of the episodes, people of Kochuthope have talked about how intrusive human development has led to coastline erosion and how people are living in constant fear of their houses being washed away, says Jima Rose, the channel's station head. Radio Kadal also covers programmes pertaining to various schemes and initiatives for the community.

Mary Anitta, creative head, adds that most of them are unaware of the services they can avail from various offices, such as Matsyafed (Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd), Matsyabhavan or Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board. The channel also plans to give weather updates/warnings to the fisherfolk. "Their safety is often compromised for want of timely information. The Ockhi tragedy was an example. It is important to pass on information in the language they understand, which we hope to achieve when we get the required infrastructure, says Vipin. At present, the channel only has an office building at Karumkulam, provided by the Karumkulam Panchayat. They are looking for funds to set up a studio and buy necessary equipment. "Now everything is done on our phones, be it taking bytes, voice-over, narration. We edit the content on our laptops. It is challenging in that there have been days when we go in search for silent spots to record voice-overs, says Jima, a post graduate in sociology. Ibin Nayakam, currently pursuing his masters from Central University of Jammu, and Romer Ignatius, an undergraduate student, are other members of the core team. Children and volunteers of CSCF chip in to help with interviews, recording, narration, editing and the like. Anitta, a postgraduate in linguistics, avers that the response from the community has been encouraging. "People now call us Radio Kadal, she says.

Red, orange alerts for 5 Kerala districts; warning of very heavy rains in parts of south India

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/red-orange-alerts-for-5-kerala-districts-warning-of-very-heavy-rains-in-parts-of-south-india/story-SfT6ThwRb0VMgObfH0BobO.html

"The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday issued red and orange rain alerts for Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha and Idukki districts of Kerala for December 2 and 3. IMD has also issued warnings for Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala that are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall during December 2 and 3 and isolated heavy rainfall on December 1 and 4. The department in a tweet added that heavy rainfall is expected at isolated places over south coastal Andhra Pradesh too during December 2 and 3 and over Lakshadweep during December 3 and 4. The alerts came after IMD projected intensification of depression over the southeast Bay of Bengal that can lead to a cyclonic storm in the next 24 hours. The weather department said, "It is very likely to intensify further into a Deep Depression during the next 12 hours. It is also likely to intensify further into a Cyclonic Storm during subsequent 24 hours. Due to the harsh weather conditions, fishermen have been advised to not enter the southeast Bay of Bengal from November 30 to December 1, southwest Bay of Bengal and east Sri Lanka coast from December 1 to 3. "Total suspension of fishing operations during 30th November to 4th December over the areas. Fishermen out at Sea are advised to return to the coast by today, IMD added. If the depression deepens into a cyclone then it would be a second storm hitting the southern states of India in less than a week. The 'very severe cyclonic storm' of Cyclone Nivar had hit Tamil Nadu and Puducherry on November 26. While no large-scale damage to life or property was claimed, Nivar caused heavy rains and had flooded Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Kerala: Man grows 5,000 fish in Kadalundi river using cage farming method

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/agriculture/animal-husbandry/man-grows-5-000-fish-in-kadalundi-river-using-cage-farming-method-1.5230549

"A man is introducing new career opportunities by preparing cages for fish farming in Kadalundi river. Moonniyur Chuzhali native Rijay Karat is experimenting with cage that can house upto 5,000 fingerlings as part of Subhiksha Kerala scheme of the state government. Rijay started fish farming by making two cages to grow fish and installed it in the river. The cages were made using metal net, plastic nets and tar barrels. Rijay has also made a boat for taking care of the cages. With the help of friends and locals, both the cages and the boat were launched in the water. The young farmer is growing the fingerlings supplied by the Department of Fisheries for freshwater fish farming. He is growing GIFT tilapia variety of fish that can be harvested within 6 months. In order to ensure safety of the cages, he has arranged surveillance

system on the river banks.

Kerala: Fishers to go on strike against ordinance

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/fishers-to-go-on-strike-against-ordinance/article33156979.ece

"A section of fishers and boat owners will go on a district-wide token strike on Monday protesting against the proposed Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Quality Control Ordinance. The protesters will also stage a dharna in front of the Fisheries Department office at Beypore. Fishermen's organisations and boat owners from Beypore claimed that the State government wanted to implement the ordinance as such without holding any public hearing. "If it is implemented, the government will be able to claim 5% of the auction amount as commission, which will double the loss of stakeholders in the sector, they argued. A functionary of the Kerala Boat Owners Association said the proposed ordinance was equal to open extortion in the name of supporting other ailing segments. "Those who came to power with a promise to do away with middlemen in the sector are now trying to emerge as middlemen, he alleged. A joint coordination committee of fishers and boat owners said the token strike would be organised in front of all district-level offices in the State. The committee also made it clear that it would never cooperate with the implementation of the proposed ordinance, as it would double the financial burden on the struggling community.

Kerala: National award for best fisheries cooperative society

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/kochi-national-award-for-fishermen-society/articleshow/79316476.cms

"Fishermen development welfare cooperative society (FDWCS) based in Njarakkal, which has been working for the welfare of fishermen for the past three decades, has bagged national award for best fisheries cooperative society. The award, instituted by National Fisheries Development Board and given on World Fisheries Day (November 21), carries a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh. "They considered our performance for the past three years. Every year we make a profit of more than Rs 30 lakh from our activities, says Jithendrakumari, secretary, FDWCS. The 32-year-old society, under the Matsyafed, short for the Kerala state co-operative federation for fisheries development, was formed in 1988. "We have been doing a lot of activities for the welfare of fishermen, including a medical store which provides an annual discount of around Rs 6.5 lakh for medicines. We also provide pension for fishermen who are above 70 years, says P G Jayakumar, president, FDWCS. The society has now around 3,790 members. "If not for our loans, most of them would have had to depend on private money lenders. For fisher groups we pay upto Rs15 lakh for buying equipment like nets and boats, said Jithendrakumari.

Kerala: Kovalam fishermen now home deliver fresh, seasonal fish

"Over a hundred dolphins swimming alongside each other in clear blue waters. And a few whales too. It was a lucky day for Kovalam-based Hanif Mohammed Q and guests on his boat. “It's another world out there, says Hanif, recalling the sight. An interior designer, Hanif has been fishing out of passion for 15 years, and owns two boats. He knows the wonders of the sea first-hand, and wants to share it with others. “I take people on small trips into the sea, says the 40-year-old, adding that from July to August, and February to March, guests can witness the migration of dolphins. Hanif demonstrates how fishing is done along the way. “I want to encourage parents to show children the outdoors; to let them experience Nature at its best, he adds. “They can learn about the sea, among a lot of other things, he says, adding how once, his guests released turtles caught in a fishing net. He is now in the process of setting up his company, called South Fin for leisure trips, as well as finalising essentials such as changing rooms and toilets.

“We will launch in 10 days or so, he says. Hanif has launched yet another recent venture: Fresh Fins, an initiative that lets people from Chennai order fresh fish online. “My intention is to help small boat fishermen make a better living, he says. With less financial support from the Government and no access to facilities to store their catch, these fishermen often end up selling to middle-men for a pittance. “I want to take their catch directly to customers, he explains. Right now, he sells catch from over 45 boats from Kanyakumari to Ennore and 90% of his team, right from call-centre executives to delivery persons, are from Kovalam. “There are 40 people in my team right now, and we deliver as far as Mogappair and Anna Nagar West, he says. Apart from eliminating middlemen and ensuring small boat fishermen get a good price for their catch, Hanif wants to familiarise people with seasonal fish and promote sustainable fishing. “Customers should get used to the idea of eating what is local and seasonal, he says. “This way, they will be able to enjoy a wide range as opposed to the usual vanjiram that big boats bring from as far as Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Kerala: A hydropower project has got both environmentalists and Adivasi communities worried

https://scroll.in/article/978363/in-kerala-a-hydropower-project-has-got-both-environmentalists-and-adivasi-communities-worried

"While Kerala's contentious Athirapilly dam may be temporarily on hold due to peoples'

resistance, a smaller 7.5-megawatt hydropower project in the vicinity has got both environmentalists and Adivasi communities worried. The Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project, which will require the diversion of eight hectares of forests in Thrissur district and is just a stone's throw from the proposed Athirapilly dam site, is all set to become a reality. An order from the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited dated September 3 has sanctioned the felling of hardwood trees in the forest land allocated to the Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project. Operations are expected to commence soon and 1,897 trees will be axed. Adivasi communities living in the area and local activists are opposing the hydropower project, and their concerns are many.

“This hydropower project will involve the loss of rich forests, said SP Ravi, secretary of the Chalakkudy River Protection Forum, a non-governmental organisation that has resisted the Athirapilly hydel project for more than a decade. “It violates not only the Forest [Conservation] Act but the Forest Rights Act and the State Disaster Management Act as well. A long history The Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project is a tailrace development project that aims to harness electricity from the water flowing out of the existing Sholayar hydro project. The project received environment clearance in 1990 itself, and the state government sanctioned eight hectares of forest land under the Vazhachal Forest Division for the project. However, the project was stalled for several reasons. The transfer of forest land was delayed by more than 20 years, causing its environmental clearance to stand cancelled. But in 2013-14, the project obtained both Stage-I and Stage-II environmental clearances. Interestingly, as per the project details listed on the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited website, the project is being implemented as a Clean Development Mechanism under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. A Clean Development Mechanism, as per Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol (which India is a signatory to), can earn a country certified emission reduction credits in recognition of the clean, green energy it produces or utilises. But while the project may be clean (hydroelectric power is categorised as “clean because it is renewable and does not pollute unlike fossil fuels), the hydropower project may be anything but green. Malabar pied hornbills also use the evergreen forests in the Vazhachal Forest Division.

Impact on local biodiversity The forest land where the project is planned – which will involve razing down an unquantified number of small trees as well as 1,897 large trees including giants with a girth (or circumference) of more than 500 centimetres, according to Ravi – is home to tropical wet evergreen and semi-evergreen forests which support a diversity of wildlife. Fifteen acres of the eight hectares being diverted for the project under the Vazhachal forest division is part of the Parambikulam Tiger Reserve's buffer zone, Ravi told Mongabay-India. Surveys have recorded between 120 and 139 bird species in the Vazhachal Forest Division alone. These include species such as the uncommon Malabar pied hornbill Anthracoceros coronatus. A recent survey that assessed the impact of the 2018 floods recorded 196 bird species in the division; the area could be a “stronghold of hornbills in the Western Ghats, the report found.

Birdwatcher and naturalist Susanth C, whose birdwatching group Warblers and Waders has been conducting surveys almost every year at Anakkayam and Vachumaram since 1995, has observed the state bird – the great hornbill – breeding in the area.

The Vazhachal Forest Division is also the only known home of the Athirapilly night frog, which was described in 2017. Frog biologist Sandeep Das (Kerala Forest Research Institute) has also encountered several individuals of the Cochin forest cane turtle (classified as "Endangered as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List) here. The region is home to 131 butterfly and 51 odonate (dragon and damselfly) species, including endangered species such as the Malabar tree nymph, as well as 1,164 flowering plants, of which 103 are endemic to the Western Ghats. More than 60 species of mammals, including the Asian elephant, use the Division. In fact, the area between Anakkayam and Vachumaram (which is part of the area where the Small Hydro Electric Project will come up) is used by at least three herds of elephants, said biologist Sreedhar Vijayakrishnan who studied and followed elephants here for both his masters and doctoral studies."A few solitary males too used that area, he added.

"There's one herd, probably with an extremely small home range, in the Vachumaram range that uses the area round the year. Small hydropower projects in such areas are not devoid of impacts. A study in 2017 found that in Karnataka, there was a strong correlation between the construction of four Small Hydro Electric Projects along the Netravati river and the onset of human-elephant conflict in the area. Neglecting forest rights and consent Such forest loss can impact the Kadar community in other ways too. The location of the proposed Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project – where the blasting for an approximately 5-kilometre-long tunnel will occur – is located within the 400 square kilometres of forest land that has been allocated in 2014 as community forest resources to the Kadar community here, under the Forest Rights Act (2006), say locals and activists. The Kadar rely on these forests for a range of non-timber forest produce, harvesting which is their only means of sustenance and livelihood. They also extract medicinal plants from the area, said Geetha VK, chieftain of the Vazhachal settlement. The excavation and construction for the project will occur very close to the Anakkayam settlement and the tunnel will go through the Sholayar settlement, she said.

The proposed site of the SHEP is also close to a local sacred site that people in the Sholayar and Anakkayam settlements worship at and where they conduct annual festivals, she added. The stream in the vicinity is also used for fishing. Geetha and her community worry that their access to these natural and cultural resources will be affected by the implementation of the Anakayyam hydropower project. The large landslide that occurred right next to the Anakkayam tribal colony during the floods of 2018. It is in such a disaster-prone area that the Anakayyam Small Hydro Electric Project is to be constructed. Photo credit: Chalakkudy River Protection Forum. And their fears are not without reason. A study in 2017 on the social and ecological

impacts of small hydro projects found that the construction of four Small Hydro Electric Projects in the Gundia river basin of the Netravati river in Karnataka severely restricted locals' access to the river which they used to rely on for sustenance fishing because entry to the area from the reservoir to the tailrace canal was restricted. They also found that employment of locals in such projects – which is often listed among the benefits that such projects can accrue to local communities – was mostly temporary. “Without the consent of the respective grama sabhas, this project [Anakkayam] cannot be taken up.

And the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited never applied for their consent, said Ravi. The Cochin forest cane turtle in the Vazhachal Forest Division. The species is listed as 'endangered' by the IUCN Red List. An already sensitive area Moreover, the Anakkayam settlement – near where the excavation for the Anakkayam project is proposed – is the same area that witnessed a fairly large landslide during the floods that the state saw in 2018. Any excavations here can enhance disaster risks, said Ravi. “And this is against the Disaster Management Act 2005. The costs that the project will incur is also far higher than the benefits it can accrue, he added. As of 2018, the Anakkayam project was budgeted at approximately Rs 139 crore. Board orders uploaded on the KSEB website detail this, and that an amount of Rs 61 lakh has been allocated as compensatory afforestation for the trees being logged. However, there can be no replacement for the loss of ecosystem services that these forests provide, said Ravi. While he will have to refer to the specifics of the project to answer whether a site for compensatory afforestation has been identified, the Kerala State Electricity Board Limited has not done anything unlawful by initiating the Anakkayam project, said Chairman and Managing Director NS Pillai.

“The project has obtained both Stage I and Stage II clearances from the Ministry, he said. Local resistance In light of all these concerns, the Chalakkudy River Protection Forum will be launching a campaign against the project, clarified Ravi. Their demands are simple. “We want the order to fell trees in the area to be withdrawn immediately, and the Anakkayam project cancelled, he said. Eight of the nine Kadar settlements in the vicinity have convened ooru sabhas or meetings and passed resolutions against the project, said Geetha. “These have already been submitted to the Thrissur District Collector and officials in the Forest Department, she said. “To us, every single tree is our god. We will resist the Anakkayam project just as we did the Athirapilly dam. Divisional Forest Officer Vinod SV confirmed that he had received the resolutions from the settlements and sent it to the Thrissur District Collector. Since the environmental clearance for the hydropower project was afforded before the community forest rights were granted, the legality of which order will hold will need to be ascertained, he added. Meanwhile, local activists are planning to voice their angst against the Anakkayam Anakkayam Small Hydro Electric Project on November 18 by conducting protests across different locations in the state.

Kerala: 2 women running floating fish stall in Kottayam

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/city/kochi/kerala-2-women-running-floating-fish-stall-in-kottayam/videoshow/79214138.cms

"Two local women are running a floating fish stall for livelihood in Kottayam under the 'Theeramaithri' project of the fisheries department of Kerala. The stall is run by Vineetha and Shyama under the 'Theeramaithri' program of fisheries department. These women also request people to maintain COVID SOPs to curb the spread of the virus. The Theeramythri programme is the flagship programme of Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) that encourages handholds fisherwomen for self employment.

Kerala: Matsyafed to launch online fish sales across State

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/matsyafed-to-launch-online-sales-across-state/article33078478.ece

"The Kerala State Cooperative Federation for Fisheries Development (Matsyafed), the apex fisheries cooperative in the State, is set to expand online fish sale in Ernakulam and other districts after the service was launched on November 6 in Thiruvananthapuram. The cooperative is marketing fresh fish under the brand. "Matsyafed Freshmeen with a view to reaching the best quality fish to customers across the State. The venture is meant to ensure quality fish supply as well as sustainable income for the fishing community, said a Matysafed official. The supply of favourites such as sardines, mackerel, tuna, anchovy, and king fish will be made to customers once a message is sent to the Matsyafed number 8086380862. Orders can also be placed through www.matysafedfreshmeen. com. The application "Matsyafed Freshmeen for placing orders can be downloaded from Googleplay. Matsyafed already has a chain of 67 fresh fish outlets across the State and six mobile fish units under the brand name "Anthipacha. The apex cooperative's efforts have been to ensure fresh fish supplies of high quality in hygienic conditions. Free cleaning and cutting as per the customer's requirement is one of the services being offered while value added products such as curry, pickles, and cutlets are also available through the online service.

Kerala: Renovation of three fish markets begins

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/renovation-of-three-fish-markets-begins/article33035737.ece

"Renovation of three fish markets in the district Puthenchantha at Varkala, Nadukadu at Kattakada and Panachamoodu at Parassala formally got under way on Thursday. Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma, who launched the works, also inaugurated various roads in the Varkala and Chirayinkeezhu Assembly constituencies through videoconferencing. The fish

markets in Thiruvananthapuram figure among 65 such facilities across the State that are being renovated at Rs. 193 crore sanctioned through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board. The Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation is the the executing agency. Facilities The markets will have dedicated space for retail outlets, butcher stalls, cold storage system, preparation room, toilets and loading. Anti-skid floor tiles will be laid on the main blocks of the markets. The markets will also be equipped with leachate treatment plant, drainage system, freezer and parking space.

Kerala: Launches new eco-sustainable project to improve livelihoods of fisherfolk

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-launches-new-eco-sustainable-project-improve-livelihoods-fisherfolk-137086

"Named Parivarthanam, the scheme will promote processing and marketing of clean fish and its fresh products. A pioneering eco-sustainable programme Parivarthanam, to help the fishing community was launched here on Friday, aiming to improve the livelihood skills of youngsters along the coastline and also enable socio-economic uplift of the fishermen community. Conceived to manage the states aquatic and agricultural products through intelligent use of human resources, the scheme will promote processing and marketing of clean fish and its fresh products, Fisheries minister J Mercykutty, said. At the ceremony, the minister also formally handed over to Finance Minister Dr T M Thomas Isaac a set of retort pouches carrying value-added products. Dr Thomas Isaac also released a bcook on the project. Parivarthanam, which means change, will be spearheaded by Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC). Conceived to also provide jobs to college dropouts and migrant workforce returning home due to Covid-19, the scheme envisages a rapid improvement in the standard of living of the states fisher communities by encouraging entrepreneurship. Parivarthanam will also guarantee a fixed price to fish-catchers as a fair compensation. The mission ensures their participation in the distribution of unadulterated fish online and otherwise, the minister said. Local administration bodies and peoples representatives, too, will be part of the scheme, which will entertain private participation too. Besides the state-run KSCADC, the Union governments Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) will monitor procurement and processing of fish besides ensuring its quality. The state administration will oversee Parivarthanam, conceived to be self-sufficient in six months. KSCADC, based in Thiruvananthapuram, will carry out the scheme through entrepreneur groups. The 2008-founded corporation will also train job-seeking youngsters as per the skill development guidelines and encourage them to complete studies. The scheme will extend help for dropouts doing manual labour to repay educational loans and aid their fisher families. It will handhold them to start CIFT-recognised seafood units. The project envisages a range of value-added products in the processing stage. These include dry fish, pickles, marinated fish and cutlets. Fishworkers will also be trained to handle facilities for frozen fish. Tie-ups with local

aqua farms will guarantee supply of fish without break. The scheme will also sell live fish. Already a CIFT-guided processing unit has opened in Kollam, where a training programme for women just got over. Present at todays function were KSCADC Managing Director Sheik Pareeth, CIFT Principal Scientist Dr K Ashok Kumar and Society for Advanced Technologies and Management Vice-Chairman Roy V Nagendran.

Kerala: Parivarthanam' to improve lives of fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/parivarthanam-to-improve-lives-of-fishers/article33042207.ece

"Kerala today launched a pioneering eco-sustainable programme for the development of its fishing communities, as Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma inaugurated 'Parivarthanam' which charts to improve the livelihood skills of youngsters along the coastline and also improve their socio-economic condition. Conceived to manage the State's aquatic and agricultural products through intelligent use of human resources, the scheme will promote processing and marketing of clean fish and its fresh products, said the Minister. At the ceremony, she formally handed over to Finance Minister T. M. Thomas Isaac a set of retort pouches carrying value-added products. Dr Isaac also released a book encapsulating the details of the project. The project will be spearheaded by Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC). Conceived to also provide jobs to college dropouts and migrant workforce returning home due to COVID-19, the scheme envisages a rapid improvement in the standard of living of the fisher communities by encouraging entrepreneurship. 'Parivarthanam' will also guarantee a fixed price to fish-catchers as a fair compensation. The State-run KSCADC, the Union government's Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) will monitor procurement and processing of fish besides ensuring its quality. KSCADC Managing Director Sheik Pareeth, CIFT Principal Scientist K Ashok Kumar and Society for Advanced Technologies and Management vice-chairman Roy V Nagendran attended.

Kerala: Fisheries dept inks MoU for multi-species hatchery

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/nov/07/fisheries-dept-inks-mou-for-multi-species-hatchery-2220378.html

"In a big boost to the state government's efforts to encourage brackish water fish farming, the Chennai-based Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) has partnered with the state Fisheries Department to set up a multi-species fish hatchery in Thiruvananthapuram district.An MoU was signed between CIBA and Kerala government's Agency for Development of Aquaculture for establishment of the hatchery at Odayam in Thiruvananthapuram. As per the MoU, CIBA will provide scientific and technical support to the government for developing captive breeding and seed production technology of commercially important brackishwater

fishes like Asian seabass, milkfish and pearl spot. The partnership also aims to support critical human resources development through hands-on training programmes. “The establishment of the hatchery would provide stimulus for augmenting brackish water finfish production in the state apart from ensuring livelihood generation,, said CIBA director K K Vijayan. “Kerala has 1.26 lakh hectares of brackish water resources. Ensuring timely availability of seeds in a farmer-friendly manner will help develop the sector, he said. CIBA Fish Culture Division principal scientist M Kailasam said fish species such as seabass, milkfish and pearl spot are ideal for Kerala, considering the resilient nature of the species to changing salinities and their market demand in the state.

Kerala: Matsyafed to procure fish directly for small vendors

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/matsyafed-to-procure-fish-directly-for-small-vendors/article32993196.ece

"Ending the monopoly of middlemen and agents, Matsyafed will now procure fish directly for small scale fish vendors, distributing it through fisher cooperatives. Thousands of vendors across the State, most of them women, will benefit from the initiative, which also ensures the availability of quality fish. “Fish vendor cooperatives will be formed in all major markets and Matsyafed will supply the fish for them on a daily basis. This will put an end to the exploitation of both fishers and vendors while preventing the inflow of formalin-laced fish. This will be very advantageous to women who are engaged in post-harvest marketing, delivering the catch to thousands of households, Matsyafed chairman P.P. Chitharanjan told The Hindu. In the initial phase fish will be made available to the vendor cooperatives that are already active and then more units will be formed covering all parts of the State. “The project will be launched through a fish vendor cooperative in Punalur, he added. At present the vendors have to pay 12% commission to the agents who buy large volumes and later sell it on a high margin. Boats usually fix the deal with the agents while at sea and very often the vendors have to return empty handed as the price will be too high for them to afford. “Once the project takes off, vendors who sell both marine and inland fish will get the catch at reasonable rate. This will also ensure the daily supply of catch to vendors, he says. Matsyafed at present has 45 high-tech fish marts, six mobile units while 14 new marts are being opened in association with service co-operative banks in various districts. The Federation is also planning to launch its online services shortly.

Kerala: Panel to study potential of seaweed farming in State

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/panel-to-study-potential-of-seaweed-farming-in-state/article32991013.ece

"The Fisheries Department is exploring the potential of seaweed farming along the Kerala coast as a source of income and employment for coastal communities. For carrying out a feasibility

study along the coastal stretches, the Department has formed a committee headed by the Director, Fisheries. The panel includes representatives from the Fisheries Department, Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) and the Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala (ADAK). The study by the eight-member committee will cover aspects linked to technical and financial viability, economic potential including livelihood generation, steps needed to establish market linkage, the species that can be taken up for farming and the methods of farming suitable for the Kerala coast. “Shallow coastal waters featuring reefs, such as the ones found in south-east Tamil Nadu, are considered ideal for seaweed farming. The potential of coastal waters in Kerala needs to be studied. We are planning to organise a pilot study in this regard, a committee member told The Hindu. Often dubbed the 'food of the future,' seaweed is grown and harvested across the globe for a wide array of applications in industries such as food, pharmaceutical, fertiliser, energy and cosmetics. China tops the list of seaweed producing countries. In many countries, such as Japan, it is part of coastal cuisines. In recent years in India, the central government has been encouraging maritime States to enhance seaweed production as a means of income and employment generation for coastal communities. Seaweed cultivation found mention in the Union Budget 2020-21 with the Centre stating its intention to promote cage culture and the growing of algae and seaweed. In August this year, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, had urged maritime States to explore the possibilities lying hidden in seaweed farming.

Kerala: Fishers, boat owners to protest against fisheries ordinance

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/nov/02/fishers-boat-owners-to-protest-against-fisheries-ordinance-2218049.html

"The mechanised fishing boat owners and traditional fishermen in the state will launch a statewide agitation demanding the withdrawal of the Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Quality Control ordinance issued by the state government on September 23. According to the fishermen, the ordinance was issued without conducting a public hearing. The boat owners and workers will take out a protest march to the fisheries station at Vypeen in Ernakulam on November 2, demanding the withdrawal of the ordinance. A similar protest will be held in front of the Fisheries deputy director office in Kozhikode on the same day, said All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal.

“The ordinance makes it mandatory for the fishing boats to pay 5% of the auction amount as commission to the government. The restrictions imposed on fishing in the name of Covid

outbreak have pushed the fishing sector into crisis. The proposal will add to our burden, said Joseph Xavier. The Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Union is also planning to launch a protest against the ordinance. As per section 4 (5) of the ordinance, "The government can collect an amount not above 5% of the auction amount as commission. This amount will be divided among the auctioneer, Fishermen Cooperative Society, local self-government, fish landing centre, harbour management society, fish market management society and the government. However, Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma denied the allegation that the government was trying to steal a share of the fishermen's earnings. "The government has brought in the ordinance to save the fishermen from the exploitation of middlemen. This has helped improve the income of the fishermen. The auctioneer and harbour management society will get 1% of the auction amount and 1% cent will be collected for fishermen welfare activities. It is the middlemen who are spreading misinformation, she said. Meanwhile, The fishermen have alleged that a few fishing boats in Kollam were involved in paired pelagic fishing which was banned in India.

Kerala: State's first mussel and sea fish hatchery to come up at Puthiyangadi

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/states-first-mussel-and-sea-fish-hatchery-to-come-up-at-puthiyangadi/article32966659.ece

"Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has said construction work on the fish landing centre at Puthiyangadi will begin by December. The Minister was inaugurating the construction of Kerala's first mussel and sea fish hatchery at Puthiyangadi through videoconferencing. She said that with the help of technology, a direct hatchery for production of mussel and seafood was becoming a reality in Kannur. Ms. Mercykutty Amma said the government was giving due consideration to the Malabar region when it came to coastal development activities. The opening of the hatchery in the Malabar region where mussel farming is most prevalent will be a great leap in the sector. She said quality seeds were being produced through research with the help of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The hatchery aims to produce 50 lakh sea fish and 50 lakh mussel seeds a year, the Minister said, adding that it would be raised to one crore. In view of the declining availability of fish in the State, several schemes are being implemented under the Department of Fisheries to enhance fish production. A major issue facing fish farmers is poor availability of quality fish seed.

It is mostly supplied to farmers from other States or drawn directly from waterbodies, she observed. The marine fish seed production centre will be set up at Puthiyangadi to ensure availability of quality fish seed to farmers. The construction of the centre will be carried out by

the Kerala Coastal Development Corporation. The aim is to make the project a reality within 10 months. The fish seed centre will be set up at a cost of ?5 crore. The hatchery covers an area of ??1208.6 square metres for seed production and rearing, 133-metre-long drainage system, an FRP tank with a capacity of 30 tonnes, and other modern facilities. T.V. Rajesh, MLA, laid the foundation stone for the hatchery. Rajmohan Unnithan, MP, was the chief guest. District Panchayat President K.V. Sumesh and Kalyassery block panchayat president V.V. Preetha were also present

Kerala: Decision to allow boats from other States to use harbours welcomed

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/decision-to-allow-boats-from-other-states-to-use-harbours-welcomed/article32959681.ece

"The decision by the Ernakulam district administration to allow fishing boats from other States to use harbours in the district amid strict curbs has come as a great relief for fishing operators in major harbours like Thoppumpady. 0The fishing harbour, which has been seriously affected by the ban on operations by other-State fishers, would now be able to operate at full capacity, said M. Majeed of the Fisheries Harbour Coordination Committee on Monday. The decision by the district authorities brings to an end the confusion created by the ban. The ban had prevented long and tuna liners from using the Thoppumpady harbour, the biggest harbour in Kerala, over the past one month. Mr. Majeed said that there were around 650 longliners and gillnet boats that were the mainstay of the harbour. Mr. Majeed said that the government decision to impose a strict watch over the operations was welcome as the fishing industry as a whole wanted to cause no disruption in the COVID-19 containment activities.

Kerala: Net threat remains despite ban

https://www.deccanherald.com/specials/insight/net-threat-remains-despite-ban-906623.html

"Kerala was one of the first states to implement stringent laws against capturing fish under the minimum legal size (MLS). Now it is instituting similar rules for the inland fishing sector as well. While these measures are widely appreciated by those working in the sector as steps to curb exploitation of the fish resources, they also point out that several other key issues remain unaddressed. The Kerala government implemented MLS rules for 58 varieties of fish in 2017 - 18, after a drastic drop in the catch of several key commercial fish, especially oil sardines. In 2019 too, the state saw 15.4 per cent decline in fish production from 6.43 lakh tonnes in 2018 to 5.44 lakh tonnes in 2019 according to data provided by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). Oil sardine and Indian mackerel, two major commercial fish in the state, dropped by nearly 50 per cent. Sunil Muhammed, a former principal scientist with CMFRI, said that while the enforcement against catching fish below the MLS was made

effective by the authorities, one grey area was the size of the net. Though the rules only permit use of square shaped nets with size above 25 mm and 35 mm, use of diamond shaped nets with smaller dimensions is quite rampant. Muhammed says that enforcement should focus on net size, rather than penalising boats afer they catch the juvenile fish. Meanwhile, boat operators in Kerala allege that it is mainly the fishing boats from neighbouring Karnataka and Tamil Nadu that exploit the juvenile fish, to supply the thriving fish meal industry in these states.

All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association state president Peter Mathias said that after the strict enforcement against violation of MLS, there was a considerable decline in the illegal catch of small fish. The decision to implement regulations like MLS for inland fishing is hence a welcome move. However, he pointed out that there are other serious issues that affect the fish production of the state, like dumping of solid and chemical waste and obstructing the natural flow of water by constructing dams. In 2018 - 19, the Kollam coast in South Kerala alone saw the removal of 55,000 kilogram plastic waste under the 'Suchithwa Sagaram' (Clean Sea) initiative. Though the government decided to extend the project across the state, it was not very effective due to the lack of focused support of the authorities.

Kerala: Stuck in troubled waters, seafood sector seeks aid to tide over crisis

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/oct/22/stuck-in-troubled-waters-seafood-sector-seeks-aid-to-tide-over-crisis-2213403.html

"The seafood export sector that contributes Rs 6,000 crore to the state's economy and provides employment to nearly one lakh of the population is on the verge of collapse, thanks to shrinking markets and mounting losses caused by the Covid-induced crisis. The industry body has approached the Union Commerce Ministry and the Kerala chief minister, seeking immediate relief to help the sector survive."With fishing activities yet to resume, the processing units are also unable to function due to the lack of supply. The exports have nose-dived to 20 per cent of what they were before, as our regular customers overseas have gone bankrupt and are not placing orders. Besides, the prices have also declined by 20 per cent, with many units being forced to go for distress sales at rock-bottom prices to sustain themselves, said Alex K Ninan, regional president of Seafood Exporters Association of India. The fishing industry in Kerala had lost a huge number of fishing days due to the floods in the past two years. The landing patterns have changed and the volume of sea-caught items has fallen drastically, leaving the industry with very little raw material. The sector is dependent on high-value catches like shrimp, squid, cuttlefish, octopus, and clams, among other fishes."Marine fishing has almost come to a complete halt due to the closure of fishing harbours. Distressed over the loss of livelihood, many boats have moved to other states.

A majority of the pre-processing centres have been shut down due to a lack of raw material. Now, peeling activities have also moved to villages in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra

Pradesh, and Odisha,"" Alex pointed out. He added that high-valued stocks meant for summer and Easter sales could also not be shipped due to the restrictions on international trade, which led to the large-scale cancellation of orders during the peak season. ""This was a major blow to the reeling industry. Many ports were shut down and the cargo that was already on the high seas had to be called back or sold on huge discounts. There were also many instances of non-payments from buyers,"" he said. KSEB turns villain It is at this point that the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) enters, issuing disconnection notices to processing units as they failed to pay their arrears during the lockdown period. ""The government had postponed the payment of the arrears, which had come as a big relief to the distressed industry. But now, the KSEB is demanding the payment in a lump sum. This is a very drastic move, as unlike other industries, we cannot run our frozen warehouses withouelectricity,"" Alex said. The processed marine products have to be kept at a temperature of minus 18-degree Celsius round the clock. ""Hence, major processing units incur an electricity bill of Rs 18-20 lakh per month. Small units have to pay up to Rs 8-10 lakh. Amid the lockdown, the units have been served bills ranging from `30 lakh to Rs 1 rore, and our pleas to allow payment in instalments have been rejected. If the electricity is disconnected, our stocks will perish and we will go bankrupt, he explained, adding that the companies would also be drastically affected by the sudden large outflow of working capital to clear the electricity dues.

""We request the government to allow us to clear the dues in instalments,"" he said. The industry has been supporting its workforce despite the crisis, as they could not afford to lose their skilled and trained workers. Though the Union government had promised support, the banks did not waive interests during the lockdown. They instead granted additional loans with a higher rate of interest, and that too, by taking personal security. The crisis has led to the downgrading of CRISIL rating, and the banks are using this as a tool to deny loans and charge higher interests."Considering our situation, the government should provide diesel at subsidised rates to fishermen, in addition to ensuring financial support for pre-processing units. Banks should waive the interest rates at least for the lockdown period, and provide temporary working capital at subsidised rates so we can tide over the crisis. The government should also provide at least 50 per cent of the salary paid during the lockdown period through ESI,"" he said.

Kerala: Law proposed to streamline auctioning will ensure fair price for fishers: Mercykutty Amma

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/oct/22/law-proposed-to-streamline-auctioning-willensure-fair-price-for-fishers-mercykutty-amma-2213434.html

"Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma on Wednesday sought to allay concerns of the fishermen community that the new law proposed to streamline the auctioning system in

harbours would be detrimental to them.She criticised the divisive tactics orchestrated by vested interest to sabotage the government plan. The Kerala Fish Auctioning, Marketing and Quality Control Bill will be introduced as an ordinance to put an end to the exploitative practices of middlemen and to ensure fair price to fishermen, the minister said. The auction will be controlled by the harbour management societies comprising representatives of fish workers. Such societies have been formed in 19 of the 25 fishing harbours in the state. During lockdown, the functioning of the harbour management societies found acceptance among the fishing community. The bill was first introduced in the assembly in 2018.

According to the minister, 70 per cent of the price of the catch is cornered by agents as the fishermen or the boat owners have no control over the selling price. The proposed law mandates a maximum of five per cent as commission and anybody demanding more than that will face legal action.“Out of the five per cent commission, the agent is eligible for just one per cent and the rest goes to the Matsyafed cooperative society and the harbour management society, the minister said.

Stuck in troubled waters, seafood sector in Kerala, India, seeks aid to tide over crisis

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/oct/22/stuck-in-troubled-waters-seafood-sector-seeks-aid-to-tide-over-crisis-2213403.html

"The seafood export sector in the sout? Indian state of Kerala that contributes Rs 6,000 crore to the state's economy and provides employment to nearly one lakh of the population is on the verge of collapse, thanks to shrinking markets and mounting losses caused by the Covid-induced crisis. The industry body has approached the Union Commerce Ministry and the Kerala chief minister, seeking immediate relief to help the sector survive."With fishing activities yet to resume, the processing units are also unable to function due to the lack of supply. The exports have nose-dived to 20 per cent of what they were before, as our regular customers overseas have gone bankrupt and are not placing orders. Besides, the prices have also declined by 20 per cent, with many units being forced to go for distress sales at rock-bottom prices to sustain themselves, said Alex K Ninan, regional president of Seafood Exporters Association of India. The fishing industry in Kerala had lost a huge number of fishing days due to the floods in the past two years. The landing patterns have changed and the volume of sea-caught items has fallen drastically, leaving the industry with very little raw material. The sector is dependent on high-value catches like shrimp, squid, cuttlefish, octopus, and clams, among other fishes.

"Marine fishing has almost come to a complete halt due to the closure of fishing harbours. Distressed over the loss of livelihood, many boats have moved to other states. A majority of the pre-processing centres have been shut down due to a lack of raw material. Now, peeling activities have also moved to villages in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and

Odisha,"" Alex pointed out. He added that high-valued stocks meant for summer and Easter sales could also not be shipped due to the restrictions on international trade, which led to the large-scale cancellation of orders during the peak season. ""This was a major blow to the reeling industry. Many ports were shut down and the cargo that was already on the high seas had to be called back or sold on huge discounts. There were also many instances of non-payments from buyers,"" he said. It is at this point that the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) enters, issuing disconnection notices to processing units as they failed to pay their arrears during the lockdown period. ""The government had postponed the payment of the arrears, which had come as a big relief to the distressed industry. But now, the KSEB is demanding the payment in a lump sum. This is a very drastic move, as unlike other industries, we cannot run our frozen warehouses without electricity,"" Alex said.

The processed marine products have to be kept at a temperature of minus 18-degree Celsius round the clock. ""Hence, major processing units incur an electricity bill of Rs 18-20 lakh per month. Small units have to pay up to Rs 8-10 lakh. Amid the lockdown, the units have been served bills ranging from `30 lakh to Rs 1 rore, and our pleas to allow payment in instalments have been rejected. If the electricity is disconnected, our stocks will perish and we will go bankrupt, he explained, adding that the companies would also be drastically affected by the sudden large outflow of working capital to clear the electricity dues. ""We request the government to allow us to clear the dues in instalments,"" he said. The industry has been supporting its workforce despite the crisis, as they could not afford to lose their skilled and trained workers. Though the Union government had promised support, the banks did not waive interests during the lockdown. They instead granted additional loans with a higher rate of interest, and that too, by taking personal security. The crisis has led to the downgrading of CRISIL rating, and the banks are using this as a tool to deny loans and charge higher interests."Considering our situation, the government should provide diesel at subsidised rates to fishermen, in addition to ensuring financial support for pre-processing units. Banks should waive the interest rates at least for the lockdown period, and provide temporary working capital at subsidised rates so we can tide over the crisis. The government should also provide at least 50 per cent of the salary paid during the lockdown period through ESI,"" he said.

Kerala: COVID-19: Gillnet boats denied permission to enter Kochi harbour, move to other states

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/covid-19-gillnet-boats-denied-permission-to-enter-kochi-harbour-move-to-other-states-1.5142127

"The gillnet boats, which operate focusing on Kochi harbour, are moving to other states as they are not allowed to enter the harbour in the name of COVID. About 100 boats carrying fish left for Thengapattanam in Tamil Nadu and Malappa in Karnataka due to the restrictions.

With this, Kochi harbour is facing severe crisis. Gillnet boats have been operating in Kochi for over 50 years. The government issued the notification restricting entry for the boats from other states. Though gillnet boats from Tamil Nadu came to the harbour the other day, the police and fisheries officials made them return due to protest from local boats. About 600 gillnet boats from Thuthur in Tamil Nadu were operating in Kochi. They were not coming to Kochi for the last 7 months due to lockdown. Even after harbours reopened last month, no decision was taken regarding gillnet boats. Thousands of labourers, who depend on these boats, are now jobless. Kochi harbour used to have a business of upto Rs 2 crore per day. As gillnet boats are not allowed, even one fourth of the business is not available. Larger fish for export like seer fish and tuna are caught by gillnet boats. Export companies used to buy fish from Kochi and the highest price was available in the harbour. However, the boats are unlikely to come to Kochi due to the restrictions. It is alleged that the gillnet boats were granted unofficial permission for entering Kochi harbour. The fisherfolk also conducted COVID tests as per the direction of authorities. However, they were stopped after returning from the sea. Following this, they moved to other states to sell the fish. The Gillnet Buying Agents Association demanded that the government should issue a fresh notification allowing them to enter Kochi harbour. They also submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister, Fisheries Minister and leader of opposition and in this regard.

Kerala: Over 1,000 Chinese nets to be dismantled

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/over-1000-chinese-nets-to-be-dismantled/article32866282.ece

"Over a thousand unlicensed Chinese nets (commonly called dip nets) in the picturesque Kumbalanghi backwaters are slated to be dismantled by the Fisheries Department early November following a Kerala High Court directive. Traditional fishers across the political spectrum have welcomed the decision and called it ‘long overdue' and in the best interest of artisanal fishers, who depend on the backwaters for a living. In solidarity “Dip nets in the Kumbalanghi backwaters have broken all the regulations governing inland fisheries. They have disrupted normal activities of traditional fishers, and small boat owners will be mobilised to display solidarity with the departmental action, said State convener of Fisheries Coordination Committee Charles George in support of the decision to dismantle the nets. “It has become an industry disrupting movement of boats and traditional fishing activities by those who live close to the backwaters, said P.K. Shivadattan, social activist and former president of the Kumbalanghi grama panchayat. But dip net owner Paul Kannamchery differs.

“It is a livelihood means. If they are being dismantled, the government must direct us to some other means of daily sustenance, he said. Panchayat president Martin Anthony welcomed the high court order and said the dip nets should be taken away. However, some consideration

should be given to small fishers, who live off the backwaters using these nets, he added. Rampant violations Mr. George said that dip nets in the Kumbalangi backwaters rampantly violated rules regarding the distance from the shore at which they can be erected; that a person should not own more than one net; that they should be erected at specified distance from each other, and that they should not use lights of more than 100-W capacity. “However, people from different walks of life have turned dip nets into an investment, some of them reportedly owning more than a dozen of them. They deploy workers from other States on a purely commercial basis, he said. “There were just 74 dip nets in the Kumbalanghi backwaters in 2010. The number has now gone up to more than a thousand, he added. Most of the nets are located on the eastern side of the Kumbalanghi-Perumpadappu bridge running in northerly and southerly directions. In some of the areas, like the junction where the Aroor backwaters meet the Kumbalanghi backwaters, some nets have been erected across the backwaters totally blocking traffic and other fishing activities, alleged Mr. Shivadattan. Fisheries Department sources said that the owners would first be asked to dismantle the nets on their own before it takes the action. The department would also issue a public notice via newspapers to the owners.

Kerala: Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, 2010, to be amended

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-inland-fisheries-and-aquaculture-act-2010-to-be-amended/article32854434.ece

"The Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, 2010, will be amended so as to enable conservation of species, scientific breeding, and a sustainable livelihood for the fishing community. The proposed amendments also seek to introduce better control over ornamental fisheries, and fish species introduced into the State. The Cabinet on Wednesday decided to recommend to Governor Arif Mohammed Khan to promulgate an Ordinance to facilitate the amendment. The amendment seeks to regulate the fishing of species with low populations during their breeding seasons. A minimum legal size will be determined for the fish that can be caught, as was done in the case of 58 marine varieties to protect juvenile fish. Aquaculture will be made more scientific so as to enable the State to achieve self-sufficiency in fish production. The amendments seek to scientifically organise aquaculture methods followed in the State. An important aim is to check the introduction of foreign species and their marketing and breeding in the State. Breeding of species potentially harmful to local varieties will be checked. Ornamental varieties Further, the amendments seek to introduce better controls over the marketing and exhibition of ornamental fishes. No person without a valid licence will be allowed to sell ornamental varieties on an industrial scale or exhibit them for more than 30 days by selling tickets. However, this does not apply to the sale of fish from a production unit or displaying them at homes. Further, the display and sale of banned species will not be allowed. Regional fisheries management councils and Aquaculture Development Agencies will be formed with fisher representatives as members. Constructions will not be allowed in any

notified rivers, backwater stretches, or lakes that obstruct natural flow and fish breeding.

Kerala: Production of indigenous fish varieties to be enhanced

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/production-of-indigenous-fish-varieties-to-be-enhanced/article32848571.ece

"Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has said that the government is planning to enhance production of indigenous fish varieties in inland waterbodies. Speaking after inaugurating the peninsular carp hatchery at Thalapuzha in Wayanad district, the first such initiative in the country, on Tuesday, Ms. Mercykutty Amma said the project envisaged conservation and enrichment of indigenous carp variety of fish. The project also aims to ensure food security, especially food security of tribal people in the district, the Minister said. Farmers in the district should come forward to ensure availability of indigenous fish varieties and eliminate over-dependence on other districts for fish, Ms. Mercykutty Amma said. Spawns will be produced at the centre, and they will be reared at a fingerlings rearing farm at Karapuzha. Later, they will be disbursed to farmers and released in reservoirs inside the forest. The hatchery unit has been set up with technical assistance from the Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture, Bengaluru, at a cost of ?1.56 core. It has the capacity to produce 10 lakh spawns a year. The fingerlings rearing farm at Karapuzha has been set up at a cost of ?1.7 crore, and it can rear 30 lakh fingerlings a year.

Kerala: Shortage of labourers hits fishing operations

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/shortage-of-labourers-hits-fishing-operations/article32838484.ece

"Though fishing harbours and fish landing centres in the district were reopened on Monday by complying with the COVID-19 protocol, about 30 trawler boats at Beypore harbour could not operate because of shortage of labourers. Fishermen union leaders said some of the technicalities related to the issuance of fitness certificates to migrant fishers were causing issues to them. “The larger boats, each cost at least ?25 lakh, have been lying idle at Karuvanthiruthi for over six months. Many of the boats will have to be repainted to prevent rusting. Boat owners are finding it difficult to get labourers and mobilise money for the pending repairing works, said Karichal Preman, vice president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Owners Association. He said the process to issue fitness certificates for migrant fishermen should be simplified to help the remaining trawlers resume operations. He said that Health and Fisheries officials should adopt feasible measures to speed up the process. Boat owners from Beypore harbour said the latest unlock guidelines permitting the reopening of harbours and fish landing centres were only addressing concerns of local fishers.

According to them, service of more number of trawler boats will only help fishermen families.

Safety concerns Meanwhile, Fisheries Department sources said the permissible number of trawler boats from the harbour area had already been granted clearance for operation and the case of remaining ones could be considered only in accordance with the next phase of unlock action plan. The trawlers that resumed operation from Beypore had gone through the same procedures insisted by the district administration to fight COVID-19 spread effectively in the coastal area, they said. An official attached to the Fisheries Department said the operation of only 50% of the total fishers would be allowed at present at harbours and fish landing centres considering safety aspects. “Clearance can be given to the remaining segment only by complying with this ratio for their own safety, he said.

Kerala: Vizhinjam seaport is eating up Thiruvananthapuram’s beaches and fishing villages

https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/adani-vizhinjam-seaport-kerala-thiruvananthapuram-coastal-erosion_in_5f8080cfc5b62d09d272b28d

"Shanghumukham Beach, just outside the domestic terminal of Trivandrum International Airport in Kerala, no longer exists. Once among the most popular landmarks in the city, it now lies completely submerged in the Arabian Sea. Large, angry waves have also eaten away at the coastal stretch of the only road that connects the domestic terminal to the rest of the city. Vehicles bound for the airport now struggle to pass through the narrow stretch that remains of the once well-laid road. Still unsatiated, the sea has now started advancing towards the airport itself. According to Vijayan Joseph, a former researcher with the International Ocean Institute, coastal erosion started in the region in the 1970s when a minor breakwater was constructed for the Vizhinjam fishing harbour. However, the advancement of the sea has accelerated alarmingly after construction began in 2015 on Thiruvananthapuram's much-touted Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport. The Rs 7,525-crore seaport is being built in a Public Private Partnership (PPP) between the Kerala government and the Adani Vizhinjam Port Private Ltd (AVPPL), a subsidiary of the Ahmedabad-based Adani Group's Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd (APSEZ), which won a bid for the project five years ago. Initially slated for completion in 2018, the project has been plagued by delays, but promises to be India's deepest port, capable of handling 80% of the country's cargo trans-shipments.

The state government has contributed 360 acres of land to the project and permitted AVPPL to reclaim 130 acres from the sea. But some environmentalists, activists, and fish workers blame the upcoming seaport and the construction of its breakwater for large-scale coastal erosion that is wiping out more than three dozen fishing villages, threatening the very existence of areas such as Kovalam, Valiyathura, Beemapally, Vizhinjam, Veli, Kallumoodu and Muttathara. Dr K.V. Thomas, a scientist with the National Centre for Earth Science Studies, told HuffPost India that the coastal erosion in the Vizhinjam-Shanghumukham Region will become worse in

the coming years, even posing challenges to the airport and several establishments of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in Veli and adjacent Thumba. “Unfortunately, neither the environmental nor livelihood impacts of the project have been assessed sufficiently or accurately. The port is irresponsibly sited in the erosion-prone coast of Thiruvananthapuram. Studies indicate that the coastline is not braced to subsume the potential impacts from construction and operation of the Vizhinjam port, he said. Pointing to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification of 2011, according to which the construction of ports is not permissible in coastal areas prone to high erosion, Joseph expressed concern about further deterioration. “Only 600 metres of the 3.1 kilometre breakwater has been completed so far. You can imagine the horrific situation once the work gets completed. he said. One of the earliest opponents of the project, Thomas now heads the People's Vigilance Forum, a civil society group that consolidates protests against the construction of the seaport.

According to T. Peter, general secretary of the National Fishworkers Forum and a resident of the coastal village of Veli, the project has started affecting the livelihood of fish workers in the entire area. He told HuffPost India that sea erosion has already left 172 families homeless and that fishing would be reduced due to the maritime traffic and associated risks of coastal pollution once the project is operational. Peter died of pneumonia and multiple organ failure induced by Covid-19 on October 8, a week after speaking to HuffPost India. Environmental activist Thomas Lawrence also expressed concern about the rapidly deteriorating situation. “Thiruvananthapuram is famous for its beautiful beaches like Shankhumukham, Kovalam, Valiyathura, Beemapally, Vizhinjam, and Veli. They all are eroding because of coastal erosion. Last year alone, 603 people from 143 families in the coastal fishing villages were shifted to relief camps due to incursion of the sea, he told HuffPost India. Both AVPPL and the Kerala government vehemently deny charges of coastal erosion and ecological destruction. The compliance report of the seaport project for October 2019-March 2020, issued by AVPPL in consultation with the Kerala government, states that there is no shoreline degradation in the area as projected by those who oppose the project.

This denial comes a year after Kerala Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma had acknowledged that construction of the breakwater for the port had led to high tides and erosion of the Thiruvananthapuram coast. The minister declined to comment when asked about the issue and her earlier statement by HuffPost India. While awarding the work to AVPPL five years ago, the state government had fixed September 2018 as the deadline for the completion of Phase I of the project. It has progressed at a slow pace however, which Adani blamed on a severe shortage of granite needed for the construction of the breakwater, and setbacks due to Cyclone Ockhi. The deadline was later shifted to December 3, 2019, which was also not met. With the Covid-19 lockdown putting a halt to construction work in 2020, the government has now extended the project deadline to October 2021. Apart from environmental concerns, the project has been assailed with questions about its economic viability since inception. A report

submitted in 2013 by consulting firm Deloitte, which had put the total expenditure of all three phases of the project at Rs 14, 283 crore, concluded that the port was not “financially very attractive. Rubin D'Cruz, an activist from the region, says that the economic viability of the project has to be viewed in conjunction with environmental and livelihood issues. “Earlier, Kerala government authorities said Vizhinjam can send and receive huge amounts of cargo to different parts of the world without routing them through neighbouring hub ports such as Colombo, Singapore and Dubai.

However, now experts in the cargo handling sector say Sri Lanka's Colombo port will pose a tough challenge to Vizhinjam. At present, Colombo is handling around 35% of the cargo movement in the region, and is more easily accessible even from India's eastern coast. Kerala's own Vallarpadam container terminal, commissioned a decade ago, is acumulating losses due to lack of business and underutilisation of its capacities,' he told HuffPost India. Of the total project cost of Rs 7,525 crore, Adani's investment is Rs 2,454 crore, with the Union Government giving Rs 1,635 crore as a viability gap fund, and the state government's share being Rs 3,436 crore. As per the agreement, AVPPL will operate the port for 40 years, extendable by 20 more years, while the state government will get a portion of the revenue from the port after 15 years. When the project was launched by the then Congress government in Kerala led by Oommen Chandy, in alliance with Adani Group in 2015, the CPI(M) had alleged that the project involved corruption worth Rs 6,000 crore. However, the party changed its stand after coming to power in 2016.

Meanwhile, a Controller and Auditor General (CAG) report of 2017 found several inaccuracies in the project and observed that at the end of the concession period of 40 years, the project would cause a substantial loss of Rs 5,608 crore. The CAG had also found that the total project cost compared to similar ports in other states was highly unreasonable. “The project has already deposited 6 lakh tonnes of granite into the sea to construct the port, and most of it came from sensitive portions of Western Ghats. It will require one crore tonnes of granite to complete the rest of the work. A lot of public money is getting wasted, Joseph said. Even as the sea port's financial viability remains in question, Peter warned that this is only the beginning of the project's impact on the environment and the livelihood of locals. “The port is coming up just 250 metres south of the ever-busy Vizhinjam fishing harbour. Both the fishing industry and the marine biodiversity of the region have been affected. Tourism in Kovalam and Shanghumukham beaches has already been affected.

The situation will turn murkier by the time construction of the breakwater and quay walls for the port is completed, he said. He added that the construction is posing a threat to the rich marine biodiversity of the Wadge bank off the coast of Thiruvananthapuram, which is a breeding ground for over 200 varieties of fish and is the largest coral reef of the Indian Ocean. “It is home to more than 60 species of ornamental fish and other oceanic animals.

Commercially important fish such as squids, cuttlefish, carangids, tuna, anchovies and lobsters are available in abundance there. Despite the bank's status as a Marine Protected Area, the state government decided to go ahead with the project, he explained. Dr Thomas said that over 50,000 fish workers are being affected by the project as it has resulted in the destruction of breeding grounds, reduction in fish catch, loss of beaches, loss of access to fishing grounds and increased conflict with shipping vessels.“The increased turbidity of water as a result of reclamation and dredging has started reducing the fish catch as it destroys fish spawning and habitat site, he said. Fish workers say the dredging work has caused habitat loss for several aquatic organisms, especially mussels and lobsters.

According to Thiruvananthapuram-based geologist V. Nandakumar, 15 of the 33 reefs located close to Vizhinjam have been utterly destroyed, and 17 of them heavily damaged as a result of sand deposition from dredging. And yet, even amid the controversy, the seaport is not the only big infrastructure project in the area that has fallen into the lap of the Adani Group. In August this year, Adani Enterprises secured a 50-year lease to operate, manage and develop the 88-year-old Thiruvananthapuram International Airport following a Union Cabinet decision that was strongly opposed by the Kerala government. “If the coastal erosion continues unabated, the sea will reach the airport and Adani can integrate both the seaport and airport here, perhaps the first time in the world, Richens Morais, a fisherman in Vizhinjam, said sardonically.

Kerala: Activities at Thoppumpady harbour come to a standstill

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/activities-at-thoppumpady-harbour-come-to-a-standstill/article32838956.ece

"The dispute over the arrival of gillnet boats with fishers from Tamil Nadu on board brought activities at the Thoppumpady fishing harbour to a standstill on Monday, as purse seine boat workers called off all fishing activities, with harbour workers refusing to handle their catch. Though a meeting was convened by District Collector S. Suhas on Sunday, it failed to end the impasse, and talks on Monday did not see any breakthrough, said M. Majeed of Harbour Coordination Committee. Thoppumpady is Kerala's biggest fishing harbour, and it was reopened after the annual trawling ban only in the second week of August owing to the lockdown. Bad weather warnings had further disrupted fishing operations from the harbour where thousands of vessels 250 gillnet boats, 400 long liners, 300 trawlers, and 70 purse seine boats operate. The bone of contention is that fishers from other States are banned from entering Kerala harbours as per the COVID-19 protocol issued by the State government. The boats can be fined, and the Fisheries Department is considering imposing fine on four boats. A section of harbour workers feels that they should not be punished so harshly. But purse seine boat workers, who had initially objected to the arrival of gillnet boats and prevented the catch on these boats from being sold at Thoppumpady harbour, are now facing opposition from harbour

workers. There are around 5,000 workers who depend on the harbour directly for their livelihood. The long shutdown and loss of fishing days have placed fishers in a financially hard situation.

General Secretary of the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF), T. Peter passed away in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India on Thursday, October 8, 2020. He had dedicated his life for the wellbeing of fishing communities and engaged himself steadfastly to protect their life and livelihoods

https://www.icsf.net/images/what%20is%20new%20page/MR.%20Peter.pdf

"T. Peter dedicated his life for the wellbeing of fishing communities and engaged himself steadfastly to protect their life and livelihoods. He was under treatment for COVID-19 at the Government Medical College Hospital in Thiruvananthapuram . He was admitted to the hospital on October 3, but had developed pneumonia and had been on life support. A native of Veli in the district of Thiruvanathapuram, T. Peter was known for his indomitable spirit and untiring efforts aimed at upliftment of the fisher community. Over the past several decades, he was an active participant in numerous struggles on issues impacting the community at the State and National levels and on environmental issues in general. A former State president of the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), T. Peter was currently serving as editor ofAlakal, the mouthpiece of the KSMTF. This was his second term as General Secretary of the NFF. He strived to create awareness among the fishing community as well as the general public on matters pertaining to fisheries, including the annual monsoon season trawling ban and the policies governing the sector. Recently, he was also involved in the struggle to highlight the apprehension of the fisher community in Kerala with regard to the new shipping corridor that passes close to the Kerala coast. The funeral will be held at the St. Xavier's Church, Veli.

Kerala: Fishermen to protest delay in execution of housing project

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/oct/07/fishermen-to-protest-delay-inexecution-of-housing-project-2206697.html

"Its been nearly eight years since the government launched a housing project to rehabilitate the families of nearly 32 fishermen who lost their homes to sea erosion in the state capital. The state government had sanctioned `2.8 crores to the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation (KSCADC) for constructing homes in 42 cents in Valiyathura. However, the Corporation has finished constructing only eight out of the 32 homes, leaving the other families in the lurch. The beneficiaries of the project have landed in a fix after they were deemed ineligible for the Life Mission scheme of the current government. Though the beneficiaries have sought the intervention of Kerala State Human Rights Commission, nothing has happened so far. On Tuesday, a group of fisherman families submitted a letter to the

KSCADC announcing a protest. Renuka John, a beneficiary who sought the intervention of the Kerala State Human Rights Commission, said that life has been miserable after the pandemic outbreak. “I have two kids and have been living at the relief camp for the past 6.5 years. Since the pandemic outbreak, we are unable to continue at the relief camps. Recently, I tried to submit an application to get included in the Life Mission Scheme of the state government. But they rejected my application as I am already a beneficiary of another housing project, said Renuka John, who had to move to a relative's home.

“The complaint I submitted to the human rights commission has also gone in vain. They haven't called me or others, even for a sitting, because the officials didn't turn up for the sittings called by the commission, Renuka John added. Former Valiyathura councillor Tony Oliver, who is leading the protest, said that they have informed KSCADC about it. “We have decided to take to the street and protest, violating Section 144 restrictions, said Tony. A senior official of KSCADC said that they couldn't execute the project because of a dispute over the land earmarked for the project. “The land identified for the project is located adjacent to St Anthony's School, Valiyathura, and the school authorities wanted the land in exchange for another plot owned by them. We are just an execution agency and the land was handed over to us by the civic body. We wrote to them, but we haven't got a reply yet. We have given a report to the fisheries department too in this regard. Now the government has to take a call, said the official. According to sources, the Harbour Engineering Department has taken over the project.

Kerala: Chellanam residents unhappy over coastal protection project

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/chellanam-residents-unhappy-over-coastal-protection-project/article32763211.ece

"Chellanam residents are ‘disappointed' that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's announcement of a bunch of projects to protect Kerala's coast did not hold anything new for the coastal village that has borne the brunt of severe sea erosion, made more severe since the Ockhi cyclonic storms hit the village in December 2017. “The Chief Minister has only listed the projects that are ongoing. Work on geotube bags as temporary sea walls has been an utter failure, said a spokesman for Pachima Kochi Theera Samrakshana Samiti on Saturday after the Chief Minister unveiled a ?200-crore programme for coastal protection. He said that even the project to build new breakwaters off Kannamaly and Malakhappadi coastal segment was an old one. “Contractors are not taking up the project despite the work being tendered, he alleged. Residents have called for a comprehensive long-term package of measures to protect their lives and property. The coastal segment between Fort Kochi and South Chellanam saw sea erosion and flooding during the first two weeks of August as the rain intensified. Kochi Janakiya Vedhi too expressed its disappointment with the Chief Minister's announcements. “It is an attempt to create a delusion even as elections to local bodies are around the corner, said a

statement issued by Vedhi leaders here. The statement said that Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma had expressed the opinion that geotextile tubes were not effective enough for coastal protection. Despite that the Chief Minister highlighted works being done using the same technique, they said.

Kerala: CM opens renovated Koyilandy fishing harbour

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/cm-opens-renovated-koyilandy-fishing-harbour/article32748106.ece

"Promising better service to over 19,000 fishers, the renovated Koyilandy fishing harbour was thrown open on Thursday. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the completed project through videoconferencing. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Vijayan said, “Though the project was approved in 2005, it was completed by the LDF government crossing all technical hurdles. According to him, the project, which was completed at a cost of ?66.7 crore, will offer more safety to fishing boats, besides improving local fishers' trade. “Even during adverse climates, they will be able to function safely, he observed. Presiding over the function, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma said the construction of the wharf and the parking area was the most complicated part of the project. “We had to fill a waterlogged area for realising the parking facility, she recalled. Transport Minister A.K. Saseendran who unveiled a plaque said the project would help local fishers operate more boats safely, thus increasing their income. “We executed this project with farsightedness, and it will be visible in the days to come, he noted. Koyilandy MLA K. Dasan, Municipal Chairman K. Sathian, and heads of various local self-government bodies were present. Fisheries Department officials said the new amenities such as clean auction halls, store rooms, and parking space would offer a better ambiance for local fishers.

Kerala: Mpeda, Cochin Port sign ?140-crore project to modernise fishing harbour

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/mpeda-cochin-port-sign-140-crore-project-to-modernise-fishing-harbour/article32723179.ece

"Marine Products Export Development Authority (Mpeda) is set to work with Cochin Port Trust (CPT) to modernise Kerala's pivotal Cochin Fisheries Harbour with more than a dozen key features that will enhance the unit value of realisation of sea-caught items and minimise post-harvest losses. Mpeda Chairperson KS Srinivas signed an MoU with his CPT counterpart M Beena, initiating the ?140-crore project that will mobilise resources from various Central government schemes. A special purpose vehicle is being launched to implement the development plans. The harbour, built on 27 acres, facilitates berthing and landing of more than 500 vessels. Commissioned in 1978, the harbour at Thoppumpady clocks a daily average landing of 250 tonnes of fish. Processors procure a major share for exports.

Noting that infrastructural inadequacies are hampering the quality of the fish, the agreement aims for the harbour to feature air-conditioned auction halls, besides a packing hall and bays for loading and unloading. The MoU envisages the construction of electrical substations, an effluent treatment plant, a retail market, fish-dressing unit and net-mending area, besides offices, dormitories, a food court, canteen, drivers' waiting area and parking lots for vehicles. Mpeda had proposed to the Centre to renovate 25 select fishing harbours across the country. The agency is going for a similar exercise on the peninsula's eastern coast: Nizampatnam Fishing Harbour in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. “These 25 major fishing harbours contribute a lion's share of landings in the country for export. At present, India's value addition of marine products is a meagre 5 per cent. We must increase it manifold, given that the figure for South-East Asian countries is 50 per cent, said Srinivas. Mpeda's pact with CPT comes when India has 50 major and 100 minor fishing harbours, together contributing 65 per cent in quantity and 45 per cent in value of the country's total seafood exports. Estimates show a loss of nearly one-fourth of the catch during post-harvest operations. Besides poor infrastructure facilities, India's fishing harbours also face lack of professional management, poor safety measures and unhygienic handling of catch.

Kerala: Fishermen at Vizhinjam catch 20 tonne white leatherjacket fish; to export to China

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/offbeat/fishermen-at-vizhinjam-catch-20-tonne-white-leatherjacket-fish-to-export-to-china-1.5094689

"The fishermen got a good catch of white leatherjacket fish at Vizhijam coast on Tuesday. It is reported that 20-tonne white leatherjacket fish caught by the fishermen here will be exported to China. The fishermen are excited after getting such a good catch similar to ‘Chakara'. They caught onefoot long white leatherjacket fish (‘Clathi') and moon fish (‘Kathikara'). Over 25 fishing boats returned to the land with 20 tonnes of white leatherjacket fish. The school of fish caught on the fishing net when the season about to end. According to the fishermen, they had not obtained a single white leatherjacket fish last year during this season. “Wholesale fish vendors will purchase the fish and export to China, said a fish merchant. One tonne of fish costs Rs 1.5 lakh. As 20-tonne of white leatherjacket fish were caught, the fishermen will get a good income this time. White leatherjacket fish has great demand in the global market. As it has got hard skin, it is not much in demand in Kerala. Hence, the fish merchants are exporting it to foreign countries. Apart from white leatherjacket fish, the fishermen also caught moon fish (Kathikara), tuna fish (choora) and boal fish (vala) fish.

Kerala: Rs 140 cr to be spent on modernisation of Kochi harbour

https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/rs-140-cr-to-be-spent-on-modernisation-of-

kochi-harbour/1945099

"Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) is set to work with Cochin Port Trust (CPT) to modernise Kerala"s pivotal Cochin Fisheries Harbour with over a dozen key features that will enhance the unit value of realisation of sea-caught items and minimise post-harvest losses. MPEDA Chairperson K S Srinivas signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with his CPT counterpart M Beena, initiating the Rs 140-crore project that will mobilise resources from various central government schemes. ""A special purpose vehicle (SPV) is being launched to implement the development plans"", an MPEDA statement said here on Tuesday. The 1928-founded CPT runs the harbour built on 27 acres of land, facilitating berthing and landing of more than 500 vessels. Commissioned in 1978, the harbour at Thoppumpady clocks a daily average landing of 250 tonnes of fish. Processors procure a major share for exports."Also to come up are an ice plant, a reverse osmosis plant and a rainwater harvesting system besides automation equipment such as tripods, conveyor belts and pallet jacks for easier and better movement of fish within the harbour.

""The MoU envisages the construction of electrical substations, an effluent treatment plant, a retail market, fish-dressing unit and net-mending area, besides offices, dormitories, a food court, canteen, a drivers waiting area and parking lots for vehicles"", the statement said. Recalling that Kochi-headquartered MPEDA had proposed to the Centre in February this year to renovate 25 select fishing harbours across the country, Srinivas said the DPR (detailed project report) for Kochi was readied with Ernst and Young as the consultants. MPEDA is going for a similar exercise on the peninsulas eastern coast: Nizampattinam Fishing Harbour in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. "These 25 major fishing harbours contribute a lions share of landings in the country for export,"" the MPEDA head said. ""At present, Indias value addition of marine products is a mere 5 per cent. We must increase it manifold, given that the figure for South East Asian countries is 50 percent,"" he said. MPEDA"s pact with CPT comes when India has 50 major and 100 minor fishing harbours, together contributing 65 per cent in quantity and 45 per cent in value of the countrys total seafood exports. Estimates show a loss of nearly one-fourth of the catch during post-harvest operations. Besides poor infrastructure facilities, Indias fishing harbours also lacks professional management, poor safety measures and unhygienic handling of catch. MPEDA, formed in 1972 under the Union Ministry of Commerce, is a coordinating agency with central and state level establishments engaged in fishery production and allied activities.

Kerala: Fishers' Statewide protest on Oct. 15

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-statewide-protest-on-oct-15/article32669199.ece?

"Fishers under the National Fishworkers' Forum [NFF] will organise a Statewide protest

on October 15 demanding the withdrawal of three key Central regulations two in the draft stage, one already notified that pose threat to their livelihood. The fishers say that the Centre has come up with new laws in the past six months, using the COVID-19 situation as a ruse to avoid consultations with stakeholders. “Some are of particular concern to the fisherfolk of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry. Fishers from all three places will come together, simultaneously launching the protests at fish landing centres and harbours, says T. Peter, general secretary, NFF. No translations The fishers allege that the Draft National Fisheries Policy was put up in the public domain during the national lockdown, making it impossible for the community members to discuss its implication. Also, translations of the draft in regional languages are not available. Fishers find it difficult to comprehend the content. According to the NFF, the draft policy takes away the rights of the traditional fishers engaged in capture fisheries and promotes privatisation of resources and culture fisheries. The community also opposes the Draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Act, 2020.

“We want amendments to the Act after considering the inputs of all natural resource-dependent groups, including fishers, he says. Shipping corridor Another demand is that the shipping corridor off the Kollam coast be pushed beyond the 500 m depth and the government conduct a study of the ship-boat collisions on the Indian coast. The shipping corridor off the Kollam coast cuts through Kollam Parappu (Quilon bank), a rich fishing ground. A lot of trawlers, large mesh gill net boats and fishers who use hook and line from both Kerala and Tamil Nadu operate in the area, making it one of the busiest points in the west coast. According to the NFF, around 25,000 fishermen depend on the Quilon bank and the corridor poses a serious threat to their livelihood. “Ideally the corridor should be located beyond 500 metres so that our livelihood is protected. Though fishing is not prohibited in the corridor, the stretch will become very risky for fishers. The NFF leaders also point out that the corridor has been notified as ‘recommendatory' rather than mandatory, making the situation complicated. “How can the corridor that is supposed to avoid accidents and loss of lives be recommendatory? It should also be noted that the corridor was notified on July 2, 2020 and came into effect on August 1, right in the middle of the pandemic, he adds.

Kerala: Govt sanctions Rs 31.16 crore financial aid for fishers

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/sep/22/govt-sanctions-rs-3116-crore-financial-aid-for-fishers-2200171.html

"An amount of Rs 31.16 crore has been sanctioned from the State Disaster Relief Fund and Rs 5 crore from the Chief Minister's Disaster Relief Fund to support the fishermen who have lost their jobs during the Covid-19-induced lockdown. The information was received from the Chief Minister's office as a response to the petition filed by former Union Minister K V

Thomas. The families of fishermen engaged in fishing activities and inland fishermen will be given an amount of Rs2,000 while registered fishermen will be given Rs1,000. As many as 1,78,365 fishermen, who are included under the Saving-Cum-Relief scheme, have been sanctioned an amount of Rs3,000. Apart from the Rs 53.41 crore which will be spent for this, around Rs630 crore has also been requested from the Central Government for the same. It has been submitted as an interim scheme which provides a daily wage Rs 500 to 1,79,840 fishermen families and 32,710 fish farmers of the state. Besides, a scheme amounting to Rs6,157.06 crore has been submitted to the Central Government for offering financial assistance to fishermen, related groups and fish farmers who have lost their jobs during the Covid-19 pandemic. A package of Rs 924.37 crore will be given to those who have lost their jobs or suffered agricultural losses during the pandemic period. The Chief Minister's Office also said that an amount of Rs5,232.69 crore, which will also be used for the rehabilitation and employment security of fishermen and allied groups, will also be included within it.

Kerala: 358 fisher families to get houses in Kollam

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/358-fisher-families-to-get-houses-in-kollam/article32649169.ece

"Three hundred and fifty-eight fisher families from the district will be rehabilitated as part of Punargeham, a housing project announced by the government for those living within 50 metres from the coastline. The project, being implemented by the Fisheries Department, will be allotting each family ?10 lakh, which includes ?6 lakh for purchasing land and ?4 lakh for construction. If the amount spent on purchasing the land is below ?6 lakh, the rest can be used for construction. Fishers across the State will benefit from the ?2,450 crore project conceived to provide safe housing for all fisher families residing in areas vulnerable to sea erosion. In a survey conducted by the Department 1,580 families currently residing in the coastal stretch from Paravur to Azheekkal were selected as the beneficiaries.

Among them 358 families, most of them from Neendakara, Vaddy and Thangassery, have agreed to move. Ninety families have identified land for purchasing and 30 have already completed registration and received the money. Six families who found house and property together were given the entire amount of ?10 lakh and the Department expects to complete the project in three years. “Fisher families residing in vulnerable regions and willing to move are being considered for the project. Bio walls will be raised in areas evacuated by the families, said Fisheries Deputy Director K.Suhiar. Fisher families from nine coastal districts in the State will be the beneficiaries of the project which will be implemented in three phases. The department had already identified the land required for the project in each district.

Kerala: Trawler intrusion sparks rift in coastal waters

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/trawler-intrusion-sparks-rift-in-coastal-waters/article32641179.ece/amp/

"Trawlers intruding the coastal waters has once again sparked a rift between fishers in the traditional and mechanised sectors. According to traditional fishers, trawlers have been scouring the coastal waters day and night breaching all norms and threatening their livelihood. “The area has run out of catch due to overfishing and the traditional fishers are returning empty handed. Night trawling is banned in Kerala and mechanised boats are not allowed to operate up to 10 km in coastal waters. But hundreds of trawlers from Kerala and Tamil Nadu are currently fishing in the area, said T. Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF). They allege that trawlers were indulging in juvenile fishing, catching fish below regular legal size and supplying it to fish meal factories. “The coastal police and marine enforcement are taking no action against the trawlers. Traditional fishers across the State have expressed their resentment over the issue. The mechanised boats are using COVID-19 as an excuse to loot the coastal waters, Mr. Peter said. The Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation and NFF had already appealed to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma demanding immediate government intervention in the matter. “The violators should be arrested and their boats seized, otherwise it will lead to a serious conflict among fishers in coastal waters, they said in a statement.

Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala: Heavy to very heavy falls likely over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Coastal & South Interior Karnataka and Kerala during 19th-20th September, 2020

https://orissadiary.com/heavy-to-very-heavy-falls-likely-over-andaman-nicobar-islands-odisha-coastal-south-interior-karnataka-and-kerala-during-19th-20th-september-2020/

"According to the National Weather Forecasting Centre/Regional Meteorological Centre, New Delhi of the India Meteorological Department (IMD): Significant Weather Features - The Monsoon Trough lies to the north of its normal position. Western end of the Monsoon Trough is likely to remain close to foothills of Himalayas during next 5 days and the eastern end is likely to shift southwards from 19th September onwards. - An east-west shear zone runs roughly along Latitude 15°N between 3.6 & 5.8 km above mean sea level. It is likely to persist during next 2 days and weaken thereafter. - Due to the above favourable meteorological

conditions, Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with isolated heavy falls very likely over Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Coastal & North Interior Karnataka and Kerala &Mahe during next 3days. - Under the influence of likely formation of a Low Pressure Area over Northeast Bay of Bengal and consequent strengthening of lower level winds along the West Coast; Fairly widespread to widespread rainfall with Isolated heavy to very heavy falls are likely over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Odisha, Coastal & South Interior Karnataka and Kerala during 19th-20th September,2020. - Moderate thunderstorm with lightning very likely at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam & Meghalaya, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Odisha, Telangana, Kutch region, Southeast & Northwest Uttar Pradesh, South Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh during next 12 hours.

Weather Warning during next 5 days * 16 September (Day 1): - Heavy to very heavy rainfall with extremely heavy falls very likely at isolated places over Assam & Meghalaya; heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim, Marathwada, Telangana and heavy rainfall at isolated places over West Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Bihar, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Madhya Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Rayalaseema, Coastal & North Interior Karnataka, Kerala &Mahe and Tamilnadu, Puducherry &Karaikal. - Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Bihar, West Bengal & Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam & Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Kutch & South Gujarat Region, North Jharkhand, South Interior Odisha, Northwest & Southeast Uttar Pradesh, Southeast Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana and Rayalaseema. - Strong Wind (speed reaching 45-55 kmph) very likely over Southwest Arabian Sea. Fishermen are advised not to venture into these areas. 17 September (Day 2): - Heavy rainfall at isolated places over West Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Bihar, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal & Sikkim, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Assam & Meghalaya, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana, Coastal & North Interior Karnataka and Kerala &Mahe. - Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Gangetic West Bengal, Assam & Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana and Rayalaseema. - Strong Wind (speed reaching 45-55 kmph) very likely over Southwest Arabian Sea. Fishermen are advised not to venture into these areas. 18 September (Day 3): - Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Coastal Karnataka and heavy rainfall at isolated places over southeast Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Odisha, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Nagaland, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Konkan & Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana, Interior Karnataka and Kerala &Mahe. -

Thundersquall (speed 50-60 kmph) accompanied with lightning very likely at isolated places

over Andaman & Nicobar Islands; moderate thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over southeast Rajasthan and thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana andRayalaseema. - Strong Wind (speed reaching 45-55 kmph) likely over Southwest Arabian Sea and along & off Kerala-Karnataka coasts and Lakshadweep area; Gulf of Mannar and Southwest Bay of Bengal, Southeast & adjoining Eastcentral Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.Fishermen are advised not to venture into these areas. 19 September (Day 4): - Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Coastal & South Interior Karnataka and Kerala &Mahe and heavy rainfall at isolated places over southeast Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana, North Interior Karnataka and Tamilnadu, Puducherry &Karaikal. - Thundersquall (speed 50-60 kmph) accompanied with lightning very likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands; moderate thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over East Uttar Pradesh and southeast Rajasthan and thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over West Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana, Rayalaseema and Tamilnadu, Puducherry &Karaikal. - Strong Wind (speed reaching 45-55 kmph) likely over Southwest Arabian Sea and along & off Kerala-Karnataka coasts and Lakshadweep area; Gulf of Mannar and Southwest Bay of Bengal, Southeast &Eastcentral Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.Fishermen are advised not to venture into theseareas. 20 September (Day 5): - Heavy to very heavy rainfall likely at isolated places over Odisha, Coastal & South Interior Karnataka and Kerala &Mahe and heavy rainfall at isolated places over south Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Madhya Maharashtra, Konkan & Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana and North Interior Karnataka. - Thundersquall (speed 50-60 kmph) accompanied with lightning very likely at isolated places over Andaman & Nicobar Islands; moderate thunderstorm accompanied with lightning likely at isolated places over East Uttar Pradesh and southeast Rajasthan and thunderstorm accompanied with lightning at isolated places over West Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Coastal Andhra Pradesh &Yanam, Telangana, Rayalaseema and Tamilnadu, Puducherry &Karaikal.

Kerala: Caged aquaculture project to be launched in Banasura Sagar reservoir

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/caged-aquaculture-project-to-be-launched-in-banasura-sagar-reservoir/article32544101.ece

"The Fisheries Department is gearing up to launch a caged aquaculture project to tap the potential of inland fisheries in the Banasura Sagar reservoir of the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) at Padinharethara in Wayanad district. Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma will inaugurate the project through videoconferencing at 11 a.m. on Tuesday. “The project,

under the Rebuild Kerala programme, aims tapping the fisheries potential of the Banasura Sagar reservoir, one of the largest earthen dam in the country, and improving the lives of the tribespeople on the banks of the reservoir, M. Chitra, Assistant Director, Fisheries Department, told The Hindu. As many as 90 batteries of cages, each of 6x4x4 metre, in nine blocks had been set up at the Kuttiyam Vayal area of the reservoir for the project and 3,840 fingerlings could be deposited in each cage, Ms. Chithra said. "We are planning to deposit 3,45,600 the fingerlings of Gift Tilapia species of fish and it can be harvested in six months, she said. "Harvest can be done twice a year and we expect an average production of 1,35,000 kg of fish in each harvest, she said. Ninety tribal fishermen families would benefit from it, Ms. Chithra said, adding that the department had constituted a cooperative society of tribal fishermen for the purpose. A sum of ?3.2 crore has been spent for the project and the Agency for Development of Aquaculture Kerala is the implementing agency. The department would soon launch a similar project at Karapuzha reservoir with 10 cages under the Innovative Aquaculture project of the State government, Ms. Chitra added

Kerala: Matsya Sampada Yojana fails to cheer fishermen

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/matsya-sampada-yojana-fails-to-cheer-fishermen/article32583487.ece

"The ?20,000-crore package under PM Matsya Sampada Yojana has failed to bring cheers to Kerala's fisher-folk, as they view the announcement as a "political gimmick eyeing the ensuing Bihar polls. Charles George, president of the Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi, told BusinessLine that Bihar is not a fish-producing State and the government has totally neglected the coastal States that are focussed in deep sea fishing and inland water fishery. The fisheries sector in the country is labour-intensive and the government should look at the concern of the producing community while focussing on increasing production. "Instead of corporatisation of the sector, we bat for co-operatisation for an inclusive overall development of all stakeholders, he said. The Prime Minister launched the scheme in 21 States on Thursday by inaugurating facilities in Patna, Purnia, Sitamarhi, Madhepura, Kishanganj and Samastipur to provide new infrastructure, modern equipment and access to new markets for fish producers apart from more opportunities for farming.

A leading seafood exporter said that the declaration would benefit only North Indian states and ignores coastal States in providing the requisite needs for the sector. The immediate requirement for the crisis-ridden seafood export sector is working capital as Covid-19 lockdown has battered the entire value chain with declining product value, dwindling sales in the overseas markets coupled with a fishing ban etc. The sector has sought interest waiver on the existing loans in the lockdown period which has been denied in the package. The seafood fraternity also demanded to raise the MEIS benefits to remain competitive in the export market.

The request for giving subsidies for ESI insurance schemes has also turned down. Guidelines missing Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, General Secretary of All Kerala Mechanised Boat Owners Association, termed the announcement as "old wine in a new bottle. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the scheme under Atmanirbhar package without giving any guidelines in availing the benefits. "We are of the view that several initiatives such as deep sea exploration, upgrading fish landing centres, marketing efforts by avoiding middlemen etc can be done with required guidelines, which is still missing in the new announcement, he said. The abundant fish resources in the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean have always prompted foreign trawlers including the Chinese to poach in Indian waters. To tap the resources, he said that the government should take efforts to curb fishing by foreign trawlers and allow Indian crafts to fish outside the EEZ as was done in major countries. Anil Tharayath Vargehse, Secretariat of National Fishworkers Forum, said that PMMSY was designed to attract investments and it expects existing players to diversify into culture based fisheries across production and supply chain. But fish workers are concerned as the support towards their livelihood in the scheme is minimal, if not merely token. The high financial investments in the sector would be subject to fluctuations in global market conditions. Large scale changes on land and water upon privatisation of public systems would expect to create permanent damages to fragile economies.

Kerala: Six fishers swam 30 km, stayed afloat for 12 hours in raging sea

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/sep/08/incredible-escape-six--fishers-swam-30-km-stayed-afloat-for-12-hours-in-raging-sea-2193844.html

"The sea was turbulent. A few wooden planks and life jackets were all they had. They were staring at death. It was a sheer test of willpower for the six fishermen from Ponnani who were stranded midsea when their boat sunk around 3.30am on Monday. Clinging to the wooden planks, they swam for 12 hours covering nearly 30km before they were spotted by the fishermen from Ponnani who had launched a search operation in eight boats. It was an epic tale of survival against all odds. The fishermen Nazar, 40, Shefeer, 35, Munavir, 36, Kunjanbava 53, Subair, 40, and Swapnasaro Senapat, 52, a native of Odisha were taken to Ponnani Government Hospital, where they were given first aid after which they returned home. The six fishermen had set off from Ponnani on Friday on 'Mahalaxmi', the boat Nazar and his friend Shafi recently bought. 'We swam clinging on to wooden planks till rescue workers came' The fishermen cast their net in the fishing ground off Kollam coast and were returning with the catch on Sunday night when water started gushing in through a hole in the hull of their boat. As all efforts to plug the hole failed, they contacted fishermen at Ponnani, who alerted the fisheries department. The boat was located around 3 nautical miles off Edamuttom beach near Nattika in

Thrissur district at that time. Though the fisheries authorities in Thrissur deployed a boat for rescue operation, the team had to return due to rough sea conditions. In the morning, the Coast Guard deployed a ship and a helicopter for search and rescue but they could not spot the fishermen or the boat.

Around 3.45 pm, the eight fishing boats that were scouring the sea off Ambathodu coast in Malappuram district spotted the fishermen and saved them. "We shared our location and waited from 10pm to 4am. The boat then sank and we caught hold of some wooden planks to escape. Subair, who lost his life jacket, took the lid of the store room to stay afloat. We swam clinging on to the wooden planks till rescue workers came, said Kunjanbava."It is incredible. We were anxious as the search team from Coast Guard and fisheries department could not spot the boat or the fishermen. We were in touch with them till 4am, but lost contact after that. But the fishing boat workers here were not willing to give up and they launched a search which yielded result, said Shafi, the owner of the boat. Missing TN fishers return to safety at Beypore Kozhikode: Five fishermen from Kanyakumari who went missing at sea since September 4 returned back to safety at Beypore on Monday morning.

The boat they had travelled in from Feroke Chaliyam, 'St Nicholas', was wrecked in the torrential rain and heavy wind on Sunday. They were rescued by another fishing boat pressed into service by the coast guard on Monday, said the coastal police at Beypore. Coastal police rescue 2 fishermen in Azhikode Thrissur: The Azhikode coastal police on Monday rescued two fishermen who were stranded in the sea after strong waves partially damaged their boat. Alappuzha natives Paliyath Aneesh, 40, and Pallikkathai Ponnan, 44, were rescued after their fibre boat Santa Maria was damaged about five nautical miles from the Azhikode lighthouse leaving them stranded. Mid-sea trouble Five fishermen from Kanyakumari who went missing in sea after their boat was destroyed in heavy rain and wind on September 4, returned to safety at Beypore on Monday morning Three fishermen, who ventured into the sea from Tanur and Ponnani, go missing after their boats capsized on Sunday Coastal police on Monday rescued two fishermen who were stranded in the sea after strong waves damaged their boat off Azhikkode coast Two from Tanur, one from Ponnani yet to be traced Malappuram: Three fishermen two from Tanur and one from Ponnani went missing after their boats capsized in rough weather on Sunday. A daylong search on Monday by the Coast Guard and the fisheries department, aided by fishermen, did not bear fruit. Those missing from Tanur are Kettungal Kunhumon and Kunhalakath Ubaid, while Kabeer Marakadavu is the Ponnani native. Three of the five from Tanur who set out in a fibre boat at 11am on Sunday managed to swim back. Kabeer was accompanied by three others, who too swam to safety.

Kerala: Mandatory antibiotic test on fish and fish products urged

http://www.uniindia.com/~/mandatory-antibiotic-test-on-fish-and-fish-products-

urged/States/news/2140720.html

"The fisheries scientists who participated in the recently held national webinar on aquatic animal health management for sustainable aquaculture has urged state governments to adopt stringent checks against antibiotic residues in aquaculture and fish products. The webinar, jointly organized by the Cochin-based Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS) and Department of Fisheries, Government of Kerala, pointed out that the presence of the antibiotic resistant bacteria in fishes, shell fishes including shrimps and fish products are increasing in a unhealthy manner. The main reasons for the presence of antibiotic resistant bacteria being found in the aquatic environment are the effluent release to water bodies and increasing organic load, it was observed. The Webinar also suggests adopting quality testing practices for domestic fish and fish products before distribution against antibiotic residues and other contaminants as implemented in the country in the shrimp export segment.

Export oriented Shrimp industry in the county has stringent quality checks and management practices in terms of antibiotic residues, but the same has not been instituted on fish and shellfish products meant for domestic consumption. Dr Riji John K, Dean of Fisheries Faculty of KUFOS and chairman of the webinar said the requirement of antibiotic residues check on fish seed and feed is more relevant in Kerala since the State Government is promoting aquaculture in all potential water bodies as part of 'Subikshakeralam' project. At present the requirement of fish seed and fish feed is very high in the State as the Subikshakeralam' project is being implemented successfully. Proper antibiotic residues check on fish seed and feed is a matter of public health concern. The main recommendation of the webinar is the inclusion of seed and feed testing for antibiotic residues to be made mandatory at state and national levels to ensure quality by enactment and strict implementation of the Fish Seed and Feed Act in all states, he added.

Kerala: Shrimp production suffers Rs 308 cr loss due to COVID-19

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-shrimp-production-suffers-rs-308-cr-loss-due-covid-19-131262

"A study report published by a Chennai-based institute has said that Kerala's shrimp production sector has suffered a loss of Rs 308 crore due to COVID-19 pandemic. In its study, the Chennai-headquartered Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) found that the unprecedented circumstances following the pandemic led to a significant reduction of shrimp production in the state, up to 500 tonnes, leaving thousands of people unemployed. The country went into lockdown mode in the last week of March, while partial lifting of restrictions began from the first week of May. The study revealed that the shrimp aquaculture was hit mainly due to reduction in farming activities and cut in days of culture during the lockdown period. The difficulty in availing seeds, feeds and labourers, for which Kerala depends on other

states, was the major reason which disrupted the farming. In addition, price hike in farming inputs and market uncertainty worsened the situation, the study said."About 50 percent of farmers gave up the practice, even after they prepared ponds prior to the farming, as they faced difficulty in accessing quality seed and uncertainty over the culture and market, the study said. In addition to the constraints in sourcing seeds due to logistic issues, increased feed cost and difficulty in accessing other farming requirements caused a substantial reduction in farming area to the tune of 30 per cent.

“The sector was badly hit as the lockdown restrictions affected transportation of shrimp feeds from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh which caused a price hike,"" the study said. It was also found out that fearing large financial losses over the disease outbreak, farmers, who had standing stocks, resorted to 'panic harvesting' of small-sized shrimps and sold them at lower prices. According to the CIBA, around 12,000 people who were engaged in shrimp farming, processing and distribution, became jobless for a six month season, making a loss of Rs 108 crore. CIBA Director KK Vijayan said that in Kerala, shrimp farming is practised in 3,144 hectares with an average production of 1,500 tonnes per annum. ""The state is dependent on Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu for accessing seed, feed and other supplements. Hence, inter-state movement of seed, feed and farmed produce for processing and export are of utmost importance for sustaining shrimp aquaculture in the state,"" he said and sought adequate insurance cover for the farmers.

Kerala: Government bans wayside sale of fish

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/kerala-government-bans-wayside-sale-of-fish/articleshow/77625347.cms

"The state government has banned the wayside sale of fish in view of the Covid-19 related emergency. Fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma said all those who currently sell fish on the roadsides should immediately change the sales point to nearby markets. “For the fear of Covid spread, fish markets had been shut for sometime now. However, it has been decided to open all fish markers by strictly adhering to Covid protocol . The decision to open the markets were taken in consultation with the fishers' unions and nongovernmental organizations working in the sector. Since the sale of fish could only be allowed subject to strict norms, fish workers selling fish at temporary wayside points should move to the markets, she said. If temporary fish sale points are to be opened, the respective grama-block pachayats can do the same in consultation with officials. “If any fish market continues to remain shut, local bodies and public are expected to bring it to the notice of the government, she said.

Kerala: Soft loans to cheer Kerala fisher women affected by COVID-19

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/aug/15/soft-loans-to-cheer-kerala-

fisher-women-affected-by-covid-19-2183762.html

"With the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the livelihood of fisher women the fisheries department has formed plans to revive their small businesses through institutional credit. Kerala Bank will offer revolving funds and working capital to women groups who are often had to depend on high interest rates charged by private lenders. The funds will be channelled through Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF). To begin with 1000 fisher women in Kollam and Alappuzha will get the revolving fund of Rs 10,000 each. They have been divided into 200 liability groups consisting of five members. Each group will get Rs 50,000 which they can use for fish sales or similar activities. ""The fund given is free of interest and the group members get adequate time to return it,"" said executive director of SAF, Sreelu N S. According to her, the scheme will be extended to fisher women in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam also by the end of this year. The members are encouraged to pay back on time with more money from the revolving fund. The beneficiaries are also eligible for long term credit and Kisan Credit Card. Fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma will inaugurate the project named 3R - Rebuilding, Revival and Reforms, on Saturday.The aid comes as a major boon for the fisher women as the interest rates charged on loans by loan sharks are often exorbitant. For every Rs 900 given in the morning the fisher women have to pay Rs 1000 by the evening. According to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) there are around 20,000 fisher women directly involved in fish mongering while an additional 30,000 are working in allied activities. SAF has also made deal with Kerala Bank to extend loans for alternative livelihood projects undertaken by women from the community. The bank has agreed to offer will offer soft loans worth Rs 5 crore to around 500 ventures, said Sreelu. According to her 50 per cent of the ventures started using the grants given by SAF have survived. It assumes significance as the national average is just 20 per cent. There are around 1500 ventures such as fish kiosks, dry fish units, eateries, tailoring units, even medical labs by the women.

Kerala: Lockdown woes: Region-level curbs cast cloud over fishing plans

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/aug/15/lockdown-woes-region-level-curbs-cast-cloud-over-fishing-plans-in-kerala-2183792.html

"The fishermen are miffed at the regional level restrictions that are bound to pour cold water over their plans to start fishing from Thursday. Several fishermen in Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Kozhikode will have to wait further due to the closure of harbours in the containment zones in Ernakulam, Beypore and Puthiyappa. All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association alleged discrimination in allowing fishing during unfavourable weather conditions. ""Kollam harbour is opened for fishing while the other major harbours in Ernakulam and Kozhikode are closed, though all of them come under containment zone,"" said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association (AKFBOA).

The closure of harbours has come as a blow to traditional fishermen using large boats.

Many of them would have set off from their village when the sea is calm. Due to inclement weather they are dependent on harbours for safety reasons. Things are not favourable for fishermen from Alappuzha who are largely dependent on harbours near the district borders. ""The restriction on inter-district movement of fishermen has made it difficult for us to find safer location to take our boats,"" said general secretary of Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation Jackson Pollayil."The harbour projects in Alappuzha were affected by the pandemic and it would take two years to complete it."" The fishermen are also concerned about the sale of fish landing at containment zones. Though it has been directed to sell the catch locally the fishermen complained that it was not a practical solution. ""The Matsyafed and Coastal Area Development Corporation should take a proactive role in the establishing cold chain mechanism and effective marketing,"" said T Peter, national general secretary of National Fishworkers Forum (NFF).

Kerala: Lockdown woes: Region-level curbs cast cloud over fishing plans in Kerala

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Development Corporation should take a proactive role in the establishing cold chain mechanism and effective marketing,"" said T Peter, national general secretary of National Fishworkers Forum (NFF).

Soft loans to cheer fisher women affected by COVID-19 in south Indian state of Kerala

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/aug/15/soft-loans-to-cheer-kerala-fisher-women-affected-by-covid-19-2183762.html

"With the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the livelihood of fisher women, the fisheries department of the south Indian state of Kerala has formed plans to revive their small businesses through institutional credit. Kerala Bank will offer revolving funds and working capital to women groups who are often had to depend on high interest rates charged by private lenders. The funds will be channelled through Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF). To begin with 1000 fisher women in Kollam and Alappuzha will get the revolving fund of Rs 10,000 each. They have been divided into 200 liability groups consisting of five members. Each group will get Rs 50,000 which they can use for fish sales or similar activities. ""The fund given is free of interest and the group members get adequate time to return it,"" said executive director of SAF, Sreelu N S. According to her, the scheme will be extended to fisher women in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam also by the end of this year. The members are encouraged to pay back on time with more money from the revolving fund. The beneficiaries are also eligible for long term credit and Kisan Credit Card. Fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma will inaugurate the project named 3R - Rebuilding, Revival and Reforms, on Saturday.The aid comes as a major boon for the fisher women as the interest rates charged on loans by loan sharks are often exorbitant. For every Rs 900 given in the morning the fisher women have to pay Rs 1000 by the evening. According to Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) there are around 20,000 fisher women directly involved in fish mongering while an additional 30,000 are working in allied activities. SAF has also made deal with Kerala Bank to extend loans for alternative livelihood projects undertaken by women from the community. The bank has agreed to offer will offer soft loans worth Rs 5 crore to around 500 ventures, said Sreelu. According to her 50 per cent of the ventures started using the grants given by SAF have survived. It assumes significance as the national average is just 20 per cent. There are around 1500 ventures such as fish kiosks, dry fish units, eateries, tailoring units, even medical labs by **the women.**

Kerala: Kochi's fishermen want restrictions lifted

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/aug/14/kochis-fishermen-want-restrictions-lifted-2183032.html

"The lifting of the trawl ban coupled with favourable weather conditions may signal the

promise of fresh fish to Kochiites. But, even as mechanised boats from various landing centres in Kerala resumed fishing a day ago, major harbours in Kochi remain shut as they're in containment zones. Authorities concerned, however, have noted a disparity as harbours in other districts such as Kollam have been permitted to function despite coming under containment zones. A memorandum has been submitted to the Chief Minister to allow activities at Kochi Fisheries Harbour (Thoppumpady Harbour) and Chellanam Harbour with Covid protocols in place. As per the memorandum drafted by Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, anywhere between 5,000 and 10,000 fishermen and ancillary workers who are dependent on the working of these fishing harbours, haven't been able to earn a livelihood owing to the lockdown.

Charles George, president, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi, highlighted the importance of fish and related activities for Kochi's economy. “The Thoppumpady Fisheries Harbour is one of Kochi's biggest harbours. I had spoken to the district collector regarding the same and requested if the harbours could resume activities, but the action has not been taken yet. Around 200 to 250 trawl boats operate in the Thoppumpady harbour along with 600 other boats. As evident, prolonged closure of the harbour leads to loss of employment. Similarly, we have only 36 inboard vessels in Ernakulam for bulk production of fish but 13 among them are in Chellanam. Only three have Covid-affected persons but the entire region is still a containment zone, he said.

Kerala: Govt”s support sought for boosting pearl spot farming

https://www.outlookindia.com/newsscroll/kerala-govts-support-sought-for-boosting-pearl-spot-farming/1913679

"Voicing concern over the below- par performance of pearl spot (karimeen) farming,Chennai headquartered Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIBA) has sought the state government"s support to boost aquaculture production of Keralas state fish. It is high time that Kerala had a road map for the successful utilisation of highly prospective brackishwater resources of the state towards the betterment of pearl spot farming practices in the region, said Dr K K Vijayan, Director of CIBA at a webinar held for fish farmers in Kerala."Even as the fish has a huge demand and market value in the state, the pearl spot farming sector is on a stagnation, unable to yield expected output given the potential resources,"" he is quoted as saying in a release here on Tuesday. According to CIBA estimates, Kerala produces around 2,000 tonnes of pearl spot per annum through farming against a demand of 10,000 tonnes. ""This data shows how far the state is lagging behind the targeted aquaculture production of this fish,"" Vijayan said.

In a bid to increase production, the sector requires a solid network of farmers, government agencies and aquaculture experts for ensuring the quality seeds and feeds which are essential

for the smooth functioning and growth of the farming practice, he said. The CIBA director said that the institute successfully developed the technology of pair breeding of the fish that would help set up cost-effective modular units of pearl spot hatcheries and produce quality seeds for the farming, in required quantities at the required time."The institute is ready to provide all scientific and technological support if the state government develops a road map to improve the sector,"" he said. Farmers should be advised to follow scientific practices to make the ventures both profitable and sustainable. Under CIBAs guidance, a pearl spot hatchery is functioning in Alappuzha district and the institute provides species specific feeds and technical support to farmers in different parts of the state.

The model can be emulated across the state, which is highly resourceful and prospective for pearl spot farming, Vijayan said. Slow growth of pearl spot is one of the reasons being faced by the aqua farmers as this fish would attain weight up to 200g during a long farming period of one year. In order to tackle this, CIBA proposes to go for selective breeding of the species which would help farmers harvest the crops with a profitable growth rate within six months. However, it requires a comprehensive plan and financial assistance from the state government as the process is likely to take up to 5 years costing Rs 5 to 10 crore for completion. ""In addition, coordinated efforts among the scientific community and the government are required to make this happen accordingly,"" he added.

Kerala: Fishing communities go e-way to tackle tough times

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishing-communities-go-e-way-to-tackle-tough-times/article32336447.ece

"Stephen S., a fisherman from Pallithottam, Kollam, remembers a time not so long ago when he was extremely diffident about switching to a smartphone. “I always believed that it would be too complicated for me, says the 67-year-old. All that changed in early July this year. Stephen was one of the 13 men and women chosen from Kerala for an online training session organised by the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) for making fishing communities aware of the formidable power of online networking tools. “I borrowed my daughter's mobile phone for attending the session. I found it very useful, says Stephen. Lockdowns and containment zones prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic have rendered physical meetings and conventional modes of protest next to impossible. Going online is perhaps the only way for a community marginalised in many ways to make itself seen and heard, feels the NFF. The sessions are meant to encourage fishing communities in maritime States and Union Territories to see online networking as a potent tool for empowerment and communication, NFF national general secretary T. Peter said. Till Wednesday, the NFF campaign has covered fisher groups in Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry.

The participants are given tips on organising and participating in videoconferences, webinars,

and capturing and uploading video footage. In each State, the NFF is assisted by the State-level fishworkers' organisations. The sessions are handled by Media Collective. "What led us to organise such a campaign was the unilateral manner in which the Central government approved the draft Fisheries Policy. Given the COVID-19 situation, you cannot simply call together a meeting or travel extensively to organise debates and protests on such issues. Furthermore, the fishing community is hamstrung by weaker education levels, although the situation is changing. Effective use of online tools is a way for far-flung fishing communities to come together and present their apprehensions at appropriate forums, Mr. Peter said. The World Forum of Fisher Peoples, a global platform for small-scale fisher people, has been holding webinars on a wide range of issues that impact fishing communities worldwide such as COVID-19 and 'ocean grabbing', he said. This monsoon in Kerala, a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases and adverse weather conditions hampering fishing operations had dealt twin blows to the fishing community. Containment zones on the coast had restricted movement and interaction among people. "In such scenarios, it is extremely important that you are able to organise and attend online meetings. I did not know a thing about them. The sessions have proven very useful, Mable Raymond, district president of the Theeradesa Mahila Vedi, said. "We have to embrace these new technologies. The COVID-19 pandemic has created certain social situations that are likely to persist for some time to come, said Valerian Isaac, a fisherman from Anchuthengu in Thiruvananthapuram who attended a session. Soon, similar sessions will be organised for fisher groups in Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal, Karnataka, and Gujarat, the NFF said.

Kerala: Call to lift trawling ban in Kerala

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/call-to-lift-trawling-ban-in-kerala/article32324226.ece

"Industry body says the ban is benefitting their counterparts in Tamil Nadu The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has opposed the extended trawl ban in the State, saying it is benefitting their counterparts in Tamil Nadu who are registering good catches. Citing safety issues related to the Covid-19 protocol and accelerated wind speeds in the seas, the Kerala Government has extended the trawling ban for an indefinite period even after its expiry on July 31; the ban was in place for 52 days. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of the association, said that the period following the monsoon fishing ban is the most profitable for fishermen. From the money they make from the catch during this period, they try to square off their debts. However, in the present season, only Tamil Nadu's fishermen have been benefiting, registering catches worth ?20-25 lakh on each voyage. Tamil Nadu's fishermen are venturing into the sea and their boats engaging in fishing activities even in the coastal waters of Kerala, he alleged. At the same time, he said, fishermen in Kerala are denied the opportunity in the name of safety. As fishermen in the State are deprived of their chances of fishing during August and September, more than two lakh people in the coastal belt are directly

dragged into poverty, he said. The threatened wind speed in the sea is morphia for fishermen of both Kerala and Tamil Nadu, who consider it a blessing in disguise. Considering the prevailing circumstances, the association has requested the Chief Minister to lift the ban on fishing and allow them to start fishing activity at the earliest.

Kerala: Unions seek succour for fisher community

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/unions-seek-succour-for-fisher-community/article32320990.ece

"The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) and the Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation have demanded permanent postings for 200 persons from the fishing community who were recruited on a temporary basis for coastal rescue operations. That the government has been unable to provide them permanent jobs indicates a neglect towards the fishing community, NFF general secretary T. Peter and federation State president Jackson Pollayil said. The State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) can effectively utilise their services for disaster management. Despite the hardships on the coast due to the COVID-19 lockdown and inclement weather, fishers have enthusiastically joined the rescue operations in flood-hit areas of the State this year also, the organisations pointed out. The NFF and the federation also have demanded urgent assistance for the fisher community as their livelihood has been affected by the pandemic and inclement weather. The community is facing intense hardships with the lockdown getting extended and adverse weather conditions preventing fishing activity. Fishers, fish vendors, and allied workers and small traders along the coast are facing starvation, they said.

Kerala: Fishing boat owners urge govt. to lift ban

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/kerala-fishing-boat-owners-urge-govt-to-lift-ban/article32318694.ece

"The Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association has said that while the Kerala government was not lifting the ban on trawling on account of safety issues, Tamil Nadu fishers were enjoying the benefits of the rich resources in the sea after the trawling ban. Association president Peter Mathias and secretary Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal said the State government should allow fishers from Kerala to venture out into the sea at the earliest because the safety warnings from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had been about wind speeds that were only normal during the monsoon season and should not be a bother for the fishermen. While the Kerala fishermen are being held ashore, their counterparts from Tamil Nadu have

been going out without any hindrance to their fishing grounds and making best of the opportunities immediately after the trawling ban period. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu have recorded rewarding expeditions so far with some of the boats recording catch up to Rs.25 lakh per fishing voyage during the current season. At the same time, the authorities in Kerala are keeping the fishermen of the State from going out in the name of safety. It was a case in which the wind was considered dangerous for Kerala fishermen while it was not for Tamil Nadu fishermen, alleged Mr. Kalapurackal on Monday, while appealing to the government to lift the ban at the earliest. There are around 3,600 fishing boats operating from Kerala, employing nearly 55,000 people directly. The trawling activities generate about one lakh days of work during the peak season, with each of the employees getting wages of about Rs.1,000 per day. There was about Rs.100 crore worth of fish landings during the peak season that began immediately after the trawling ban ended, he said.

Kerala: Uncertainty grips Thoppumpady harbour

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/uncertainty-grips-thoppumpady-harbour/article32321997.ece

"Activities at the Thoppumpady fishing harbour, Kerala's biggest such facility, look likely to remain frozen as the mechanised sector across the State anticipates a new fishing season after the 52-day trawling ban, prolonged by COVID-19 restrictions and bad weather conditions. All marine fishing activities had been banned because of bad weather conditions till August 12, said a Fisheries Department official. However, the Thoppumpady harbour is in a dilemma as Division 11 of the Kochi Corporation, where the harbour is located, continues to be under lockdown to contain the spread of COVID-19 in West Kochi areas. “The harbour has been closed for over six months now and workers are in penury, said M. Majeed, general secretary of Cochin Fishing Harbour Committee. He said that besides hundreds of trawl boat workers from Tamil Nadu, there were at least 5,000 people who depended on the harbour directly for their livelihood. The harbour is also the source of work for thousands of workers in processing units such as shrimp peeling units spread across the coastal region in Alappuzha district. “The entire West Kochi region depends on the activities at this harbour, he said, pointing to the key role played by the facility in the economic life of the area. The workers, especially those who have been in Kochi for over a fortnight to complete their quarantine period, are restless.

While their counterparts from neighbouring harbours such as Vypeen and Munambam can set out as the weather warning ends, they are confined by the continuing restrictions. Around a thousand vessels 250 gillnet boats, 400 long liners, 300 trawlers and 70 purse seine boats operate out of the Thoppumpady harbour. The landings include high value catch such as skipjack and bluefin tuna, snappers and shrimp. V.D. Majeendran of Swathanthra Matsya

Thozhilali Federation said the harbour was the lifeline of Kochi and a big contributor to the marine food export industry. Business transactions worth Rs. 4 crore to Rs. 5 crore took place at the harbour on a good day during the peak season that stretched between the end of the annual trawling ban in August and January, said Mr. Majeed. The harbour has been closed since March and there has been no activity at all. Boats and fishing gear need repair as most of them have been damaged. It was an added worry for the hundreds of boat owners, he said. Alex Ninan, representing the seafood exporters in Kerala, said the big delay in resuming fishing operations had already hit the Rs. 6,000-crore export industry hard. There are around a hundred exporting units. Most of them work at about 25% of their capacity. But 2020 has been an extremely difficult year both on account of the pandemic and the bad weather. About 50% of the annual business was completed during those months, he added. He said the loss of fishing days had contributed to a scarcity of raw materials from within the State.

Kerala: New Shipping Corridor Threatens Our Livelihood, Say Kerala Fishworkers

https://www.newsclick.in/Shipping-Corridor-Threatens-Our-Livelihood-Kerala-Fishworkers

"Following the order by the central government marking a shipping corridor along the Kerala coast, fishermen across the state have been protesting. They have said that the indigenous fishing communities will lose their livelihood due to the proposal. The state government has also decided to convey its dissent to the Union government. Though the organisations including National Fishermen Forum (NFF) are in support of shipping corridors, as they would help avoid collisions of fishing boats and vessels, they say that the new corridor proposed by the Ministry of Shipping would badly hit the livelihood of fishermen in the region. The order has been implemented from August 1. The routing system in South West Indian Waters, notified by the Director General of Shipping, cuts right through the 200-500 metre depth zone of the Kollam coast. The fishermen are not allowed to fish in this corridor and if they enter in this area, they will be punished. “The distribution of fish resources is concentrated at the continental shelf and if the corridor is passing through the shelf, it would affect the fishing community. As the corridor cuts through the 200-500 metre depth zone of Kollam, it would be the worst affected area, said V Vivekanandan, secretary of Fishmarc.

At Kollam alone, around 25,000 fishermen are expected to be affected. The first announcement about the shipping corridor was made in September 2018. A corridor from Kanyakumari to Gujarat at a distance of 20 nautical miles from coast was then suggested. But the fishing community had opposed it, as it was very close to banks. In this context, a national protest was held on November 30, 2018. Though the government had announced the corridor, there had been no discussion with the fishermen community and no rules had been published. “After that, in a meeting with the Deputy Director General of Shipping, it was informed that no final

decision had been taken. At that point, they said that the corridor is from 90 nautical mile West from Mangalore to 40 nautical miles from Kanyakumari. They also assured that fishing won't be affected, said Vivekanandan. Normally, merchant vessels have a right of safe passage and they can go anywhere from one nautical mile to 200 nautical miles during their voyage. The corridor reduces their freedom and encourages them to move in a narrow passage. Since this corridor will be congested, it will not be possible to allow fishing activities in this area. It was also stated that fishing boats can cross the corridor with caution and can fish beyond the corridor. However, it was advised that the lights, reflectors, sensors, and fluorescent paint should be used mandatorily by the fishing boats to avoid collisions, said Vivekandan. "But later, we came to know that the corridor is only from Kasargod to Kanyakumari.

We have ports from Kanyakumari to Gujarat on the West coast. But the new corridor is for the merchant ships heading to various ports in other countries which pass through our sea, he added. "The corridors shouldn't intrude shallow areas beyond the shelf, which are favourable fishing grounds,"" T Peter from the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) said."This is an important fishing area on the Southwest coast with all motorised, mechanised and deep-sea boats fishing here. The number of fishermen using this area is large and not less than 25,000. This is an unacceptable route for ships,"" he added. Kerala Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma has also said that the government will convey its disagreement over the corridor after discussions with various organisations. "We had submitted a memorandum to the Shipping Ministry in November 2018, urging it to shift the shipping corridor beyond 50 nautical miles to avoid collisions. Many fishermen have been killed as ships moving close to the Kerala coast collided with the fishing boats. However, the Centre ignored our pleas and has fixed the corridor at 12 nautical miles from the coast. The continental shelf which harbours fish schools extends up to 50 nautical miles and the present shipping corridor will affect the livelihood of the fishermen, said Mercykkutty Amma.

Kerala: Stringent protocol for fishing

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/stringent-protocol-for-fishing/article32280013.ece

"Fishing operations will start on August 7 with stringent COVID-19 protocol given the spike in cases along the coast. Although the 52-day trawling ban ended on the midnight of July 31, fishers are allowed to go to sea only from Friday in view of weather warnings. As per Fisheries Department guidelines, fishing and marketing-related activities in harbours will be managed by harbour management societies. People's committees, with a Matsya Bhavan officer as convener, have been formed for the fish-landing centres and other jetties where the catch will be offloaded. Boats will be allowed to go out on alternate days.

Those with registration numbers ending in odd numbers could operate on Mondays,

Wednesdays, and Fridays and those with registration numbers ending in even numbers, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Boats from other States and crew have been banned from entering the harbours and fishing-landing centres in Kerala. Boats leaving the Kerala shores are banned from visiting harbours/landing centres elsewhere. Fishing crew from other States currently in Kerala should be quarantined and tested and they should be allowed on board on production of a COVID-19-negative certificate. A maximum of five men will be allowed in each of the two 32-ft boats that use boat seine nets. In the case of shore-seine fishing, a maximum of 12 people will be allowed on either end of the net. The crew should maintain physical distancing and use sanitiser and face masks. Between three and seven boats will be allowed inside the harbour at a time to avoid crowding. Fisheries auctions stand banned. The price will be fixed by the harbour management societies and people's committees. Matsyafed will be responsible for the marketing aspects. Entry of trucks to the harbours for the transportation of catch will be regulated with passes.

Kerala: CMFRI report proposes streamlining fish supply

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/cmfri-report-proposes-streamlining-fish-supply/articleshow/77358768.cms

"In a report handed over to state fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma on Tuesday, Kochi-based Central marine fisheries research institute (CMFRI) has recommended streamlining of the supply-distribution value chain in the fisheries sector that is largely driven by middle men. The report, which was prepared on the request of the minister, suggests ways to address the pricing system of fish sold in the state. Primarily the work of scientists of CMFRI and Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), the report also collated inputs from Matsyafed, MPEDA and fisheries officials. Several parts of the report are likely to be integrated into the existing fisheries-related policy instruments, including the proposed Kerala fish auction, marketing and quality control bill 2018. The need for a long-term system of pricing was realized against the backdrop of novel coronavirus pandemic when the fisheries department took a series of initiatives to streamline fishing and marketing activities. A fixed pricing system at landing centres was introduced wherein harbour or landing management committees (HMCs/LMCs) fixed the prices of each species every day avoiding auctions following Covid-19 restrictions.

However, even if they worked, the arrangements needed strengthening to enhance viability of transactions. Moreover, long-term solutions are necessary to streamline the marketing system in the state considering all the existing rigidities. Among the key proposals, the report seeks to address the primary mode of price determination when fish arrive at harbours, landing centres and markets. It recommends that auctioning be devoid of any third-party intermediation. In view of Covid-19 and the imperfect fish marketing system, flexi-price system which guarantees

minimum price for each species that satisfies prescribed quality criteria should be promoted on an experimental basis, it said. The report calls for a new digitized registration mechanism at harbours and landing centres. Virtual queue and a daily token system can also be introduced. The report says that HMCs or LMCs should be given autonomous powers in decision making and a food safety representative should be present. The other recommendations include setting up of new marketing cooperatives, Kisan credit card schemes for all fishermen and modernization of infra across fish value chain.

Kerala: Fishing boats to be allowed in to sea from Aug.7

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishing-boats-to-be-allowed-in-to-sea-from-aug7/article32270393.ece

"Fishing boats will be allowed out to sea from Kerala shores only from Friday, August 7, Fisheries director M. G. Rajamanickam has said. The Fisheries Department has modified an earlier decision to allow the boats to go out from Wednesday, August 5, with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) warning that strong winds with speeds of 50-60 kmph are likely along Kerala, Karnataka coasts, and the Lakshadweep region. The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has warned that high waves with heights ranging between 3.5 to 5.5 metres are likely along Kerala coasts till Thursday. Although the 52-day trawling ban ended on the midnight of July 31, the State government had initially decided to allow marine fisheries operations from August 5 subject to stringent COVID-19 protocols, given the spike in cases along the coast. As per the guidelines, fishing and marketing-related activities in harbours will be managed by the harbour management societies. People's committees, with the Matsya Bhavan officer as convener, have been formed for the fish-landing centres and other jetties where the catch will be offloaded. Boats will be allowed to go out on alternate days. Those with registration numbers ending in odd numbers could operate on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Those with registration numbers ending in even numbers could engage in fishing operations on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Boats from other States and crew have been banned from entering the harbours and fishing-landing centres in Kerala. Boats leaving Kerala shores are banned from visiting harbours/landing centres elsewhere. Fishing crew from other States currently in Kerala should be quarantined and tested, and they should be allowed on board on production of a COVID-19-negative certificate. A maximum of five men will be allowed in each of the two 32-foot boats that use boat seine nets. In the case of shore-seine fishing, a maximum of 12 people will be allowed on either end of the net. The crew should maintain physical distancing norms and use sanitiser and face masks. Between three and seven boats will be allowed inside the harbour at a time to avoid crowding. Fisheries auctions stand banned. The price will be fixed by the harbour management societies and people's committees. Matsyafed

will be responsible for the marketing aspects. Entry of trucks to the harbours for the transportation of catch will be regulated with passes.

New shipping corridor threatens our livelihood, say fishworkers in Kerala, India

https://www.newsclick.in/Shipping-Corridor-Threatens-Our-Livelihood-Kerala-Fishworkers

"Following the order by the central government of India marking a shipping corridor along the coast of the southern state of Kerala, fishermen across the state have been protesting. They have said that the indigenous fishing communities will lose their livelihood due to the proposal. The state government has also decided to convey its dissent to the Union government. Though the organisations including National Fishermen Forum (NFF) are in support of shipping corridors, as they would help avoid collisions of fishing boats and vessels, they say that the new corridor proposed by the Ministry of Shipping would badly hit the livelihood of fishermen in the region. The order has been implemented from August 1. The routing system in South West Indian Waters, notified by the Director General of Shipping, cuts right through the 200-500 metre depth zone of the Kollam coast. The fishermen are not allowed to fish in this corridor and if they enter in this area, they will be punished. "The distribution of fish resources is concentrated at the continental shelf and if the corridor is passing through the shelf, it would affect the fishing community. As the corridor cuts through the 200-500 metre depth zone of Kollam, it would be the worst affected area, said V Vivekanandan, secretary of Fishmarc. At Kollam alone, around 25,000 fishermen are expected to be affected.

The first announcement about the shipping corridor was made in September 2018. A corridor from Kanyakumari to Gujarat at a distance of 20 nautical miles from coast was then suggested. But the fishing community had opposed it, as it was very close to banks. In this context, a national protest was held on November 30, 2018. Though the government had announced the corridor, there had been no discussion with the fishermen community and no rules had been published. "After that, in a meeting with the Deputy Director General of Shipping, it was informed that no final decision had been taken. At that point, they said that the corridor is from 90 nautical mile West from Mangalore to 40 nautical miles from Kanyakumari. They also assured that fishing won't be affected, said Vivekanandan. Normally, merchant vessels have a right of safe passage and they can go anywhere from one nautical mile to 200 nautical miles during their voyage. The corridor reduces their freedom and encourages them to move in a narrow passage. Since this corridor will be congested, it will not be possible to allow fishing activities in this area. It was also stated that fishing boats can cross the corridor with caution and can fish beyond the corridor. However, it was advised that the lights, reflectors, sensors, and fluorescent paint should be used mandatorily by the fishing boats to avoid collisions, said Vivekandan. "But later, we came to know that the corridor is only from Kasargod to

Kanyakumari. We have ports from Kanyakumari to Gujarat on the West coast. But the new corridor is for the merchant ships heading to various ports in other countries which pass through our sea, he added.

“The corridors shouldn't intrude shallow areas beyond the shelf, which are favourable fishing grounds,"" T Peter from the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) said."This is an important fishing area on the Southwest coast with all motorised, mechanised and deep-sea boats fishing here. The number of fishermen using this area is large and not less than 25,000. This is an unacceptable route for ships,"" he added. Kerala Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma has also said that the government will convey its disagreement over the corridor after discussions with various organisations. “We had submitted a memorandum to the Shipping Ministry in November 2018, urging it to shift the shipping corridor beyond 50 nautical miles to avoid collisions. Many fishermen have been killed as ships moving close to the Kerala coast collided with the fishing boats. However, the Centre ignored our pleas and has fixed the corridor at 12 nautical miles from the coast. The continental shelf which harbours fish schools extends up to 50 nautical miles and the present shipping corridor will affect the livelihood of the fishermen, said Mercykkutty Amma.

Kerala: Expedite probe into cage fishing project: GCDA

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/expedite-probe-into-cage-fishing-project-gcda/article32241754.ece

"The Greater Cochin Development Authority (GCDA) is planning to approach the State government for expediting the vigilance probe into the controversial cage fishing project at Mundamveli in West Kochi that caused huge revenue loss. A recent meeting of the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) had decided to issue a stop-memo for the project, which was illegally set up in the Coastal Regulation Zone area of West Kochi. The GCDA had approached the KCZMA last year seeking regularisation of the project, which was launched with much fanfare during the term of the previous regime led by Congress leader N. Venugopal as its chairman. However, the Authority had declined CRZ clearance for the project that was set up over an area of 4.5 acres. The KCZMA noted that a concreted shed for setting up motor was constructed at the site and machineries for running the fish farm installed. According to an internal document of the KCZMA, the cage fishing project was launched without obtaining CRZ clearance from the authority. The area where the farm was set up was in the CRZ I A category.

Mangroves, marshy land and waterlogged areas of Vembanad, which is a Critically Vulnerable Coastal Area, formed the project site. No new constructions could be permitted in the area as specified in the CRZ Notification 2011, it was noted. ‘No mandate' V. Salim, GCDA chairman, said the Vigilance and Anti Corruption Bureau had launched an investigation into the

project, which had incurred a loss of around ?5 crore for the authority. “Since the vigilance probe is on, the GCDA will approach the government to speed up the investigation and punish those who have caused financial loss to the agency, he said. The development and management of fish farm cannot be the mandate of the GCDA. No statutory clearance was obtained from any agencies concerned before launching the project. With the KCZMA issuing a closure notice, the GCDA had no other option but to down the shutters, Mr. Salim said. The wasteful expenditure was made at a time when the GCDA was struggling to make both ends meet. The GCDA was of the view that those responsible for the wrong decision and financial loss, including the officials involved, should be brought to book, he said.

Kerala: Seafood exports take a hit

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/seafood-exports-take-a-hit/article32216415.ece

"The 6,000-crore seafood export business in Kerala has taken a hit with the pandemic curbs bringing down fishing activities, closing down fishing harbours and landing centres as well as putting severe restrictions on pre-export processing centres. Fishing harbours are closed along the Kerala coast. So are most of the processing units in districts such as Alappuzha, said Alex K. Nainan, president of the Kerala chapter of the Indian Seafood Exporters Association. He said these restrictions had resulted in a situation in which raw material from other States too cannot be processed here. He said export orders for the March-April season could not be fully processed as the restrictions came into effect. Value-addition activities aimed at the coming season had not been carried out either because of the continuing restrictions and efforts to contain the pandemic. The State Fisheries Department has issued restrictions on activities in the coastal areas from Thiruvananthapuram to Kochi considering the spread of the pandemic. The serious spread of the pandemic in the coastal areas of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, and Ernakulam has brought all fishing activities to a standstill.

Fishing boat owners, in the meanwhile, said the annual trawling ban slated to end on July 31 would see more shrimp being caught giving a boost to activities in the processing sector. However, Joseph Xavier Kalapurakkal of the Boat Operators Association said the restrictions had scaled down activities substantially. “The restrictions on workers from other States operating in boats launched from Kerala centres is one of the reasons that will see reduced fishing activities, especially for shrimp catch, he added. Around 20,000 fishers from neighbouring Tamil Nadu are also being quarantined in Kerala. These workers have been asked to produce COVID-negative certificates before they can be employed. Mr. Kalapurakkal said boat owners had been incurring heavy expenses in maintaining the group of workers ahead of the end of the trawling ban and expressed the hope that the season would be profitable.

Kerala: Proposed shipping corridor near Kollam coast will hurt us, say Kerala fishermen

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/proposed-shipping-corridor-near-kollam-coast-will-hurt-us-say-kerala-fishermen-129900

"A recent order by the Indian government to mark a shipping corridor along the Quilon Bank in Kerala's Kollam has drawn flak from fishermen associations, who say that indigenous fishing communities would lose their livelihood as a result of the proposal. The Kerala government has also decided to express its dissent to the union government. Organisations like the National Fishermen Forum point out that they are in support of shipping corridors, as it would help avoid the collision of fishing boats and ships. However, they say that the new corridor proposed by the Ministry of Shipping is a favoured fishing ground, and would badly hit the livelihood of fishermen in the region. The corridor that passes through the 200 to 500-meter depth zone off the Kollam coast will become a banned area for fishermen and those who trespass it could be punished, once it comes up. The associations estimate that around 25,000 fishermen will be affected due to the move.

""We welcome a corridor route as far as it is beyond 500 meters in depth on the edge of continental shelf. It shouldn't intrude into shallow areas beyond the shelf, which are favourable fishing grounds,"" T Peter from the National Fishermen Forum (NFF) said."This is an important fishing area on the South West coast with all motorised, mechanised and deep-sea boats fishing here. The number of fishermen using this area is large and not less than 25,000. This is an unacceptable route for ships,"" he added. Discussions over this corridor were taking place for the last two years in order to reduce collisions. Even fishermen organisations were consulted during the discussions. But NFF alleges that earlier proposals of the corridor were very different."In the earlier discussions, the ambition was to cover the entire west coast of India. But as per the current notification, the corridor has been reduced to just a small stretch, off the Kerala coast and it passes through a unique fishing ground off the Quilon Bank. This may be the only location in Kerala where significant offshore fishing takes place, including the catching of deep sea prawns,"" Peter said. Meanwhile, Kerala Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma has informed the associations that the government will convey its disagreement over the corridor in writing to the union ministry after holding discussions with them. She said that the state government had suggested a corridor beyond 50 nautical miles and now the Shipping Ministry decided on a corridor that was just beyond 12 nautical miles. Kerala's Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala had also criticised the corridor and said that it would badly affect the fisheries sector in the state.

Kerala: Registration mandatory for migrant fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/registration-mandatory-for-migrant-

fishers/article32255552.ece

"Following the demand put forth by various local self-government bodies, including the Kozhikode Corporation, the district administration has decided to introduce a proper mechanism to check the health condition of fishers who come back to the district from other States. Fishermen from other States and districts will now have to complete a mandatory self-registration process on the COVID-19 Jagratha portal. The Fisheries Department will look into the details entered on the portal and take appropriate follow-up measures to monitor their health. Decisions have also been taken to issue identity cards for such registered individuals. Entry of fishers from other districts and States without the registration process will be treated as an illegal activity.

The coastal police and the marine enforcement squad of the Fisheries Department will carry out surprise inspections to ensure that migrant fishers are complying with the rules. Boat owners too will be responsible for verifying registration details of fishers. According to Station House Officers of various coastal police stations, the details of the majority of fishers who either stayed back in the district or left for home by special trains are with them for proper verification. New entrants to the field can be easily traced by verifying these records, which were collected for the purpose of issuing identity cards, they say. Fisheries Department officials say the new regulations are meant for effectively preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the coastal areas.

Kerala: Fishing activities in State to resume from August 5 with riders

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/fishing-activities-in-state-to-resume-from-august-5-with-riders/article32229989.ece

"Fishing activities along Kerala shores will be allowed to resume from August 5 subject to stringent conditions, given the worsened COVID-19 scenario in the State. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting convened by Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma on Thursday as the 2020 edition of the monsoon season trawling ban is ending on July 31 midnight. For the time being, boats and crew from neighbouring States will not be allowed to enter Kerala harbours/fish landing centres or participate in fisheries-related activities in view of the COVID-19 situation. Formal orders in this regard are expected to be out on Friday. Fishermen from the State who venture out to sea from August 5 will have to adhere to stringent disease containment protocols, given the extent of spread of COVID-19 in the coastal areas. Boats will be allowed out to sea on alternate days under an odd-even scheme based on their registration numbers.

Physical distancing norms and use of sanitiser and face masks will be strictly enforced. The crew strength in the boats also will be regulated. By August 5, management committees will be

formed in all fish landing centres and fisheries harbours. The committees will be responsible for the fixation of price. Strict regulations will be in place for the transportation of the catch from the coastal areas, especially those that are within COVID-19 containment zones. Fish unloaded at the landing centres within containment zones cannot be sold outside the zones. The ban on the auctioning of the catch will continue. From the bigger harbours, the catch will be transported elsewhere in disinfected trucks under the supervision of Matsyafed. Trade unions in the fisheries sector and representatives of boat owners attended the meeting. The annual trawling ban had come into effect in Kerala on the midnight of June 9.

Kerala: Vigil stepped up off Kozhikode against illegal entry of migrant fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/vigil-stepped-up-off-kozhikode-against-illegal-entry-of-migrant-fishers/article32222822.ece

"Checking squads of the coastal police, Marine Enforcement and Coast Guard have heightened their vigil off Kozhikode to prevent the illegal entry of migrant fishers into the district without proper health screening. Along with the squads, the Kozhikode Corporation too is keeping vigil in the area as about 13 fishermen from Colachel, who came to the city recently, were tested positive for SARS-CoV-2. The Corporation is also planning to propose a temporary ban on the entry of migrant fishers, with the support of the district administration. According to the Corporation authorities, more fishers are likely to return to the district with the end of trawling ban on July 31. “Though most of them are likely to depend on road and rail services to reach the district, there are chances of misusing fishing boats or trawlers to reach harbours, they said. However, Fisheries Department officials ruled out such a possibility as there was tight surveillance off the coast. Special squads and local harbour management committees would continue checking even after the trawling ban, they said. Meanwhile, leaders of fishermen associations and boat owners' groups said trawling boat operators could not survive without the support of migrant fishers from States like West Bengal, Odisha and Tamil Nadu. “Instead of a total ban, there should be effective measures on the part of the authorities to screen all such workers at the time of arrival and ensure our safety, they said.

Kerala: Fishers worried over inclusion of Kollam Parappu in shipping route

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-worried-over-inclusion-of-kollam-parappu-in-shipping-route/article32216193.ece

"Stephen, a 60-year-old fisher and crew member of Yeshuvinte Danam, has been making regular trips to Kollam Parappu (Quilon bank), one of the richest fishing grounds in the southwest coast, for over four decades. But in compliance with the new routeing system

announced by the Ministry of Shipping, the area will be technically off-limits to him from August 1 as the new shipping corridor claims a good portion of it. The decision was taken to introduce a safer marine traffic system. But it also denies a huge fleet of fishing boats access to the most productive strip off the Kerala coast. "A large number of boats from Kerala and Tamil Nadu operate in this part. Kollam has the maximum number of boats in both traditional and mechanised sector since it offers a good and steady catch. We have been opposing the shipping corridor from day one, he says. Off the Kollam coast where the continental shelf is wider than other parts of the State, Quilon bank also sees considerable number of merchant vessels.

"Accidents happen in several parts but it is no reason to take away an important fishing hub for the passage of ships. Ideally the State should push the corridor beyond fishing grounds known as banks. Trade unions and other stakeholders will take up the matter with Fisheries Minister J. Mercykuttty Amma on July 30, says Kollam district Matsya Thozhilali Union president H. Basil Lal. At present trawlers, gill net boats, deep sea boats with long lines and fishers who use hook and line are operating in Quilon bank. Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association says declaring it a shipping corridor is an attempt to help the corporate shipping sector. "The corridor is several nautical miles wide and it precisely cuts through the bank, one of the busiest points in the west coast. It means entering the stretch will be a high-risk affair and ships will not be responsible for any accidents that occur there. There are such banks near Vizhinjam and Ponnani, but the one off Kollam coast is the most bountiful one. Evicting the fishers from there and making them refugees are not the solution and we want the government to change this unilateral decision, he adds.

Kerala: How Thiruvananthapuram's coastal villages turned COVID-19 hotspots

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/how-thiruvananthapuram-s-coastal-villages-turned-covid-19-hotspots-129536

"Mabel Antony from Vizhinjam in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram was relieved when lockdown rules were eased in June. She could finally resume selling fish for a livelihood. "I get fish from Vizhinjam harbour. I take them by auto rickshaw to the city, then sell them by either walking through the housing colonies or sitting on the road side. When lockdown was announced, I had no income. When it was relaxed, we all went to the harbour again. The police used to shout at us to wear masks and maintain distance. But that never happened, narrates Mabel. "It was a huge crowd at the landing area. None of us bothered to wear masks or wash hands. I am sure that nobody followed any instructions from the police. Sometimes, there were hundreds of people in the harbour. We were never scared. But now we realise that was a mistake, she says. It is a similar story across coastal Thiruvananthapuram. With coastal communities returning to work after the easing of lockdown restrictions, authorities in the state

capital failed to reach the grassroots on awareness and safety. "At one point, the police were tired of telling people who gathered. They stopped. People here considered police as a nuisance. There was no one else to explain or to fully convince everyone here. After lockdown (ended), everyone was trying to get back their livelihood. That went wrong, says Solomon, a fisherman from Poonthura where Kerala reported its first case of COVID-19 community spread. On July 1, there was just one case from the coastal suburb of Poonthura.

Within a month, however, a majority of cases in the district were from Poonthura and its neighbouring areas. At the start of July, there were 78 COVID-19 patients in Thiruvananthapuram; as of Monday, there are 2,788 patients. By July 17, Poonthura and Pulluvila were confirmed to have community spread with uncontrollable local transmission. T Peter, General Secretary of the National Fishworkers Forum, points out that mismanagement led to overcrowding at the markets, which in turn caused a spike in cases of the coronavirus. "The lack of a system was the main reason. There was auctioning, where people gathered in crowds. The crowd was uncontrollable traders from outside, people who wanted to buy fish, sellers and bidders. This is a sector where we cannot easily implement regulations, he observes. "There were government orders on fish management committees to regulate crowds and decide prices of the fish that landed daily. The government had asked to avoid middlemen like bidders at the harbour to avoid crowding. But that was not followed or implemented properly. We needed proper storage facilities, waiting areas, a clean and tidy harbour and fish-landing centers. A time should have been fixed for the fish landing. But we failed in all these and it resulted in a huge crowd, Peter notes. He also said that the authorities failed to convince people of the necessity of this system.

"Getting religious establishments involved in awareness and containment activities is a necessity in coastal regions. Tactical movement was needed in coastal regions. But that was not there people had no awareness. Now they do, as many of the local youth themselves are involved in awareness campaigns, Peter says. Though the government had ordered not to conduct auctions, it was not followed by the majority of coastal regions. There was nobody to check this either. There were no restrictions for outsiders to enter the fish landing centers until a few cases were reported from the coastal regions of Thiruvananthapuram. The first coronavirus positive case near Poonthura was a fish seller from Kumarichantha, who had been frequently travelling to Kanyakumari. "Outsiders were coming into the region without any regulations. People came to buy fish, small-scale fish sellers also frequented the region, Peter Solomon, Poonthura municipal ward councillor, told TNM. When the rest of the areas in the district were deserted with very few activities taking place, coastal regions were active as usual. "Fish markets, fish landing areas and harbours in the district were totally neglected from implementing the regulations, a junior health inspector from the district told TNM. Fishing regulations were partially relaxed in the last week of April. All traditional fishing, except fishing using gill nets (kambavala) and seine boats (thattamadi), were allowed. Kambavala and

Thattamadi, where more than 50 fishermen form groups for fishing, were banned as it would lead to crowds. Some of the fishers' organisations had warned that these relaxations might cause disease spread as there are more than 20,000 traditional fishing boats in Kerala apart from Kambavala and Thattamadi.

This would naturally create a crowd at fish landing centers. "Fishing is a community-based occupation. Fishing in country boats with one or two persons is very rare. So the regulations allowing fishing are impractical. Initially, we followed the complete lockdown announced by the government. Later, there were relaxations in the industry, crowds started forming in harbours and coastal areas. When fishing resumed, people started flowing into the harbours to buy fish. Outsiders also started coming. Finally, everything went out of hand, says Charles George, president of the Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi. He adds, "There was not enough surveillance. We had always asked for a team of police and health workers present in coastal areas. The lack of proper vigilance caused this situation. Charles had objected to the relaxations in fishing and sought compensation so that fishermen can stay home without worrying about their livelihood. Only with the support and proper intervention from the government can regulations be properly implemented in coastal regions, believes Charles. "We have been asking for a fish drought package. A proper regulation in fishing and providing the fishermen a package to face this difficult situation would have reduced the spread. Fishing is important, but at this time we need restrictions on it. There will be huge loss for the poor fishermen. The government should compensate and ask them to limit their work, he urges.

Kerala: Schoolboy sends SOS to President Kovind as sea erodes his village

https://www.deccanchronicle.com/nation/current-affairs/270720/kerala-schoolboy-sends-sos-to-president-kovind-as-sea-erodes-his-villa.html

"Left with no other choice, a high school student from Chellanam, a tiny coastal village in Ernakulam, Kerala, has approached president Ram Nath Kovind seeking his intervention in protecting his village from the sea. Edgar Sebastian, a class 10 student from Chellanam, sent an email to Rashtrapati Bhavan and not only the boy but the entire village is pinning hopes on the president. "There is no one to help us. I am writing this mail out of fear. My family used to shift from our home every year during sea erosion. But this year we could not leave the house due to the coronavirus pandemic. Though the villagers have approached several offices, the authorities failed to take any measures in protecting the village from ferocious waves, Edgar said in his email.

According to the boy's email more than 400 houses in the coastal village were damaged during this monsoon. For the residents of Chellanam, sea erosion, inundation of houses and temporary relocation to relief camps or relatives' houses are annual affairs during the monsoon. But this year, the villagers, most of them fishermen, are facing an unprecedented crisis as they are

caught between the pandemic and the rough sea. Signs of hopelessness and anguish are seen on the face of every villager as they stare at a bleak future. Many families have lost their valuables when mighty waves entered their small houses. Children are worried over the loss of their online classes as many of them lost or damaged the television sets or mobile phones in flooding. The villagers are furious over the failure of the authorities in addressing their demand for a permanent system to insulate the village from lashing waves. They are up in arms against the piecemeal measures taken by the authorities like construction of temporary sea wall using geo-tubes. More than 1000 families along the more than two kilometre coastal stretch where sea wall is broken are at the mercy of sea.

"Though funds have been earmarked and works started for construction of temporary sea wall using geo-tubes it has not been completed. Every year, the authorities will take some measures for seawall construction during February and March which is just eye-wash. Nothing will be realised, said Jinson Veluthamannungal, executive committee member of the West Kochi Coastal Protection Forum. The health authorities announced the densely populated coastal village is as a COVID-19 spread cluster with more than 260 reported cases. This is an unprecedented situation. As many of the villagers are under home quarantine, relocating to camps or other houses was not possible. In many houses, women, children and the elderly had to spend day and night in the open terrace area during sea erosion. "Though the authorities have promised opening of relief camps, no one was willing to relocate as the officials failed to ensure COVID-19 protocol in the camps, said TA Dalfine, convener of West Kochi Coastal Protection Forum. "Though positive cases have been reported from only three wards in Chellanam, the entire panchayat area has been declared as a containment zone. But, the actual number of positive cases will be higher as only very few tests are being done in the area, he added.

Even though the rough sea receded from the village with huge heaps of sand and mud deposited in every household, it will take several days to get back to normal life. In Bazar, the worst affected area, toilets have become unusable in most of the households with big heaps of sand. With heavy rains expected next month, the residents are worried over another episode of sea ravage.

Kerala: Merchants' union not to stop fish sale Statewide

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/merchants-union-not-to-stop-fish-sale-statewide/article32206995.ece

"The All Kerala Fish Merchants' and Commission Agents' Association has said that it is withdrawing an earlier decision not to sell fish in the State till August 2 so as to contain the spread of COVID-19.The Ernakulam district president of the association A.R. Bijukumar said the decision was withdrawn after talks with fishers' unions across Kerala, who said that they

would be in serious financial trouble if fish sales were stopped in the entire State. The State government had issued a set of instructions to the community on fishing expeditions as well as sales. The auction system was stopped in May so as to prevent gatherings of people at fishing harbours and landing centres. However, over the past one month, fishers have been using the online system as well as an informal fixing of prices ahead of landing of boats to sell their catch. 'Spread not uniform' P.V. Jayan, a representative of traditional fishermen, said that though lockdown had been imposed on a large stretch of coast, in other areas, fishing activities had not been curtailed.

The coast of Thiruvanathapuram, Kollam, Alappuzha, and Ernakulam was facing severe spread of COVID-19. However, coastal regions in the northern districts, as well as parts of Ernakulam, had been relatively disease-free and in these areas fishing should be allowed, said Mr. Jayan. Markets closed While local fishermen were not being allowed to sell their catch in some areas, fish from other States was being sold without hindrance. Arrival of lorries from other States without proper testing of their drivers posed a health threat, he said. Mr. Bijukumar said fish merchants had decided not to sell consignments from other States to prevent spread of COVID-19. Ernakulam district's major markets like Champakkara and Varappuzha have been closed down to slow down the disease transmission.

Kerala: New concerns awaiting State's fisheries sector

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/new-concerns-awaiting-states-fisheries-sector/article32193385.ece

"As the annual ban on trawling ends on July 31, it will bring a fresh set of problems for the fisheries sector in the State, now in the grip of COVID-19. There are around 3,600 trawling boats that operate off the coast of Kerala. Most of the workers, numbering around 50,000, in these boats are from Tamil Nadu. Deploying them will be a problem, says P.V. Jayan, representing traditional fishermen in Kerala. He says fishers in Kochi and other places had brought up the problem before the Fisheries Department a fortnight ago, which then issued a standard operating procedure to ensure that fishing activities did not abet the spread of the disease. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, representing fishing boat operators, says around 20,000 fishers from Tamil Nadu were already in 14-day quarantine in Kerala. Only those who test negative for COVID-19 would be deployed in the fishing boats. Sources in the Fisheries Department say the issue of manning trawling boats after the ban has been discussed and a standard operating procedure issued. Care will be taken to ensure that COVID-19 protocols are followed. Mr. Kalapurackal says the sector generates around a lakh jobs and business of Rs.10 crore every day during the trawling season. There are 3,600 boats operating off the coast of Kerala. Of these, around 2,000 are big boats employing around 14 people per boat. There are also 1,600 boats that employ around 10 people each. He says anchovy and shrimp are being

caught in abundance now in some areas where fishing is allowed. There is strong anticipation of the formation of mud banks (Chaakara) off the coast of Alappuzha. But fishing restrictions and curbs in sales have kept fishers indoors in most of the areas in the southern districts. Protocol issued Meanwhile, the department has issued a protocol for fishers engaged in fishing operations in areas that are not under lockdown to contain COVID-19. Fishing harbour operators should keep a register of the number of people on each venture and their addresses and phone numbers.

Kerala: Virtual fish markets operate via WhatsApp in Kochi

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/virtual-fish-markets-operate-via-whatsapp/articleshow/77115521.cms

"With markets closed, locals are exploring other ways to sell fish. Most of them have started to orders through WhatsApp and deliver at consumers' doorsteps. They are mostly selling freshly caught fish from the Kochi backwaters and inland fishermen. Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), which has been working with self-help farmer groups (SHGs), has been hand-holding the Kadapuram freshfish welfare sangham to deliver fresh fish to households. “It works through WhatsApp. Around 9am, the details of available fish with picture and cost will be shared. This goes to nearly 750-1,000 people. During the lockdown period alone, the SHG earned Rs 1.6 lakh by delivering 51kg of fish to nearly 350 households every day, said KVK project coordinator Shinoj Subramannian. He said that KVK is helping fishers develop an app which will then be linked to the KVK website. “This is aimed to reassure the customer of the fish quality. There are a lot of groups selling fish but we have to just ensure its quality. One of the main challenges of youth getting into this business is that there is already a large network of fishermen and traders in the fisheries marketing sector but not much stress is being given to quality. So we advise newcomers to stress on quality.

The SHG had started with making manure from fish waste. Almost 30-40% fish waste is accumulated in the fisheries sector and it is often dumped somewhere in the waters. We trained them to make manure which is being sold in our Farme Shoppe at the CMFRI office. A group of young men have started a Varapuzha fish hub, which sells only freshwater fish. “Two of the partners who are in the Gulf helped develop a website and we have activated a WhatsApp group too. We collect fish from the farmers at Varapuzha, Kadamakudy and nearby places. Though we have just started only a couple of days ago, we have been able to cater to many as we ensure quality. We sell different varieties of pearl spot, anchovies, crab, tilapia, etc., said Jilish George, one of the owners. He said that during the initial lockdown days, the catch from his Chinese nets were sold in the neighbourhood because of fear of wastage.

Kerala: Triple lockdown puts fishermen out of job, on verge of starvation

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/jul/23/triple-lockdown-puts-fishermen-out-of-job-on-verge-of-starvation-2173497.html

"Community spread of Covid- 19 and the subsequent triple lockdown in the coastal areas, including Pulluvila and Poonthura, have dealt a heavy blow on the lives of the residents who depend on fishing for their livelihood. Total ban on seafaring has left the fishermen families in the two regions penniless as they completely rely on selling their daily catch and allied jobs to make both ends meet. A majority of the families do not have any savings and the lockdown has pushed them to abject poverty. Though the state government announced free ration of 5 kilograms of rice, many hamlets in the containment regions are yet to receive the kits. As the state government had already made it clear that community spread is taking place at Pulluvila and Poonthura, residents fear to come out of their homes. The church authorities of the two coastal regions are in talks with Latin Catholic archdiocese bishop for the state government's immediate intervention to provide temporary relief for the fishermen community.

According to the church, the people are on the verge of starvation. In certain hamlets, even the free rice has not been supplied to the residents. Last month's trawling ban, followed by the Covid-19 attack and the ensuing lockdown have hit the fishing families hard. Since they are not in the habit of keeping savings, majority of residents have slipped into starvation. “The fishermen's livelihood is completely dependent on the sea. Since fishing has been prohibited, their income has stopped. The free grain offered will not be sufficient as uncertainty persists over lifting the lockdown, said Fr Baby Bevinson, vicar, Pulluvila St Jacob's Forane church. The situation in Poonthura is not different either. “The free ration will not help the coastal folks if the lockdown is set to stay, said Fr Edison Yohannan, vicar of Poonthura St Thomas church. ‘Savings-Cum-Relief scheme' R Sandhya, additional director of the fisheries department, told TNIE the government has initiated steps to implement the ‘Savings-Cum-Relief scheme' by providing monthly installment of `1,500 to each family affected by the virus spread. “The first installment has already been released and we are in process to release the second instalment. The grocery kit distribution at Poonthura and Pulluvila is also under consideration, she said.

Kerala: Coastal residents’ long-pending demand for marine ambulances nears realization

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/jul/22/kerala-coastal-residents-long-pending-demand-for-marine-ambulances-nears-realisation-2173434.html

"The decks have been cleared for the commissioning of the state's first set of marine ambulances, a long-pending demand of the fishing community. Given the spike in COVID-19 cases, marine ambulances could be of immense help should coastal areas face medical emergencies. The first marine ambulance -- named 'Pratheeksha' -- will be deployed at Vizhinjam, followed by 'Prathyasha' at Vypeen and 'Karunya' at Beypore. The fisheries department is awaiting Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's date for the launch, an officer said.

The project to help fishermen in distress has reached a stage of realisation after the fisheries department missed a series of deadlines for its commissioning. While Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma had announced the ambulances would be launched by the end of June, trial runs of the boats were delayed even as the Mumbai-based engineer of a private company who was to certify the engines fitted on the boats tested COVID-positive."There was a delay in conducting the trial run and in placing the medical equipment on board,"" said the fisheries department officer. The Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) built the three marine ambulances at a combined cost of Rs 18.24 crore, with the float out ceremony having been held last month. The 22-metres-long ambulances are fitted with life-saving equipment and carry first-aid facilities and medicines required for emergency care.

Each vessel will have three medical beds and can accommodate eight to 10 crew members. A trained nurse will also be available inside the vessel which can reach a speed of 14 nautical miles per hour. The much-awaited marine ambulance project received an impetus after several lives were lost to cyclone Ockhi in 2017. The state government had cancelled the tender for buying marine ambulances in 2018 after bidders quoted higher amounts and explored other options CSL then signed an agreement -- on May 31, 2018 -- to build the vessels at just over Rs 6.08 crore each. Apart from government funding, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited contributed Rs 6 crore and CSL Rs 2.8 crore to make the project a reality.

Kerala: Kochi's coastal areas hit by double whammy of sea erosion, Covid-19 spike

https://www.deccanherald.com/national/south/kochis-coastal-areas-hit-by-double-whammy-of-sea-erosion-covid-19-spike-864352.html

"The coastal areas of Kochi in Kerala are struggling with the spike in Covid-19 cases and flooding of houses owing to sea erosion. The Chellanam coastal areas were the worst-hit with over hundred houses getting flooded. Over 200 persons in the locality also tested Covid-19 positive. While a triple lockdown was put in place in the locality owing to Covid-19, those on quarantine were forced to come out of their houses. Many were taking shelter on rooftops. Though the people of the area earlier used to shift to houses of relatives, now it was also not possible owing to the Covid-19 scenario. Covid-19 first line treatment was opened in the area and steps like free ration supply were initiated on the direction of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.

Kerala: CRZ violation alleged in construction of fishermen support centre at Kumbalam

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/jul/22/crz-violation-alleged-in-construction-of-fishermen-support-centre-at-kumbalam-2173012.html

"Months after the demolition of Maradu apartment complexes for flouting the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms, a new complaint has come up from a nearby area. The construction of the livelihood support centre for fishermen by Kumbalam panchayat on the banks of Vembanad lake is in the eye of the storm now.Expressing their dissent over the move, a few nearby residents have approached the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) pointing out that the construction is in outright violation of the CRZ and Ramsar site norms. "Around 40 metres of the lake have been filled for the project. The banks themselves are a no-development zone as per CRZ regulations. It is affecting the normal flow of water and we fear flooding during the monsoon. We have already intimated our objections to the village officer and filed a complaint to the chief minister, local resident Binu V K. The Kerala State Coastal Development Corporation's project worth `1.33 crore for Kumbalam panchayat will have two buildings of 2,500 sq ft each and other structures like a shed. The project which will also have a fish market is aimed at improving the livelihood of fishermen by bettering the infrastructure. Activists said the civic body's claim of having the KCMZA prior approval is a farce.

"The KCZMA has the power to give special permission for constructions in no-development zones under CRZ. But here, the panchayat has reclaimed the lake and is constructing the buildings on it. They are planning to fill more lake on the western side. Besides, the filling is an outright violation of the Wetland Protection Act. There is no credibility in their claims regarding CRZ approvals, said activist Nipun Cheriyan. Panchayat officials brushed away the possibility of halting the project. "The KCZMA had already issued its sanction for the project and the CRZ clearance was received back in March 2016. Many people are objecting to the project for their personal gains, but we are going forward with the project, said Seetha Chakrapani, president, Kumbalam panchayat.When contacted, KCZMA officials clarified that a complaint regarding the CRZ violations of the project has been received and the authority will soon start an investigation.

Kerala: Fishers fight a losing battle

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/jul/22/fishers-fight-a-losing-battle-2172924.html

"For fishers in the state, the timing couldn't be worse. The closure of four major fishing harbours -- Munambam, Kalamukku, Thoppumpady and Chellanam - along with two major markets, Aluva and Chambakkara, as Covid-19 containing measures, has spelt doom for them. Already reeling from the ban on venturing into the seas or auctioning and selling their catch, the harsh climate has come as a double blow for them. If the previous lockdown hampered sales of fish and disrupted their livelihood, the fishermen community are now anxious about their lives, being situated in containment zones and Covid clusters. Moreover, the delay in receiving

relief packages has added to their dismay.“Fishermen have been battling adversities of the sea their entire lives; Covid-19 has now added to their worries. The fisher community across the state has been badly affected during the pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. Those living at Chellanam are, undoubtedly, going through the toughest phase in life. They're literally between the devil and the dead sea -- the virus on land and stormy seas. Earlier, they could move into a neighbour's or relative's house during sea erosion but with almost 200 people testing positive, natives of Chellanam are considered to be the harbingers of the virus.

As a result, they have no chances of being rehabilitated either. Neither do they have the money nor liveable homes, said Charles George, president, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi. Charles reiterated that despite several hardships, they're yet to receive relief packages from the government which could have placed the community at a better place during the trying circumstances. “Since 2016, we have been asking for the fish famine package due to the decreasing number of fish in our seas. In April, we demanded a Covid package -- that hasn't been granted either. A meagre sum of `2,000, part of the flood relief package, was the only amount given to the community, he said. Those in the trade require more than ration kits, Charles said. “The government could lend a hand and elevate online sales of fish, without the interference of middlemen. Shifting to the online platform can be a significant lifesaver for the community, he added.M Majeed, coordination secretary, Thoppumpady Kochi Fisheries Harbour, highlighted that there were numerous who weren't part of the fisher community, but handled related operations, who were hit massively due to the recent lockdown measures and containment zones.

“Small business people in the sector are unsure of the how to pay their loans, he said. Needed: A strong network The sector is also embroiled in unfair prices and lobbying. Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, general secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, had recently submitted a letter to the Minister of Fisheries J Mercykutty Amma, on the exploitation during the fish sales. “The prices are mainly decided by middlemen and exporters. In 1996, international rates of export-oriented fish were to be displayed on shores every week, but till date, nothing has been done. The government needs to take control and bring strict measures even when it comes to selling fish online. Most men in the sector are unaware of the know-how to handle the money they receive from the business. While they venture into the seas and bring the catch, women need to be handed over the reins of marketing and selling fish. Such a network can save the sector, he added.

Kerala: Lockdown in Kerala’s coastal regions hits seafood shipments to overseas markets

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/lockdown-in-keralas-coastal-regions-hits-seafood-shipments-to-overseas-markets/article32147654.ece

"The current lockdown in Kerala's coastal areas due to rising Covid cases has had its toll

on seafood shipments and exporters say that “movement has virtually come to a standstill following the suspension of operations in processing units. “We have no clue on how to cope with the situation as we are totally stuck, Alex K Ninan, president of the Seafood Exporters Association of India-Kerala region told BusinessLine. The emerging situation assumes greater significance when there is rising demand from overseas markets, especially in the July-August period, he said. US demand is strong and Japan's is picking up. However, the shortage of raw materials is posing hurdles. The closing down of fishing harbours in landing centres, non-functioning of shrimp peeling sheds in the coastal belt of Alapuzha, have all badly affected the sector. Shrimp prices ruling firm Since the monsoon period has been considered as the period of Chakara (a rare marine phenomenon in which large numbers of fish throng an area), it is time for abundant fish availability. Though it is the peak season for varieties such as Poovlan shrimps, sardines, mackerel, anchovies, etc, he said the sector could not tap the full potential due to the ban on fishing along the coast. The sector is now facing zero production that would likely hit the country's export figures in the current year. The monsoon trawling ban ends by July 31, but the sector is unlikely to catch up with the resumption of fishing activities, he added. Meanwhile, the aquaculture data for May prepared by Equirus Securities showed that US shrimp imports in May declined 29 per cent in volume and 28 per cent in value. Imports from India were down 58 per cent and 56 per cent respectively, while the market share tanked to 23 per cent. Indian shrimp export data paints a similar picture, exports declined 31 per cent in value terms in April. These weak data points are clearly due to Covid-related lockdown. However, the report suggests the shrimp prices continue to be firm and demand is picking up and the India-China standoff needs to be monitored closely as any ban on Indian shrimps may have a ripple effect on global demand-supply dynamics. As the calls to boycott Chinese goods in India continue to rise, in the same way, Indian shipments are also facing unnecessary delays at Chinese ports, the report adds. Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of All Kerala Mechanised Boat Owners Association, said they are not venturing into the sea after the trawling ban, given the precarious Covid situation in coastal areas. There is no point in going to the sea in the absence of buyers for the catch due to the closing down of fishing harbours. “We are evaluating the situation. But all preparations have been made by bringing back the labour force from Tamil Nadu, he added. Right now, the traditional fishing sector is benefiting from the catch, especially small prawns, because of the upwelling in the seas. But this sector is also facing difficulties in selling the catch due to lockdown, he said.

Kerala: Hundreds of houses flooded in sea erosion at Chellanam, a COVID-19 cluster in Kerala

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ng_sAv0cWOI&feature=youtu.be

"Ever since the Ockhi cyclone hit this coastal village in 2017, sea erosion had become an

annual disaster for thousands of people in the panchayat.

Kerala: In the eye of the storm

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/tracking-indian-communities/in-the-eye-of-the-storm/

"Two years after they were celebrated as superheroes for saving flood victims, the coastal communities, mostly fishermen, are now being blamed for the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in coastal areas. For a population that has been wrestling a living from the sea, it is difficult to understand the concept of staying cooped up inside homes over safety concerns, say social experts working and interacting with these communities. They spent their lives under the shadow of constant fear knowing that waves can wreck their boats or wash away their shacks anytime. “They face risk all the time. When they hear of an accident they rush with their rescue boats. They are instinctively bold and for them calamity is not something to run away from. It is something you stand up to and face, says K S Purushan, an expert on coastal communities and fisheries sector. “You are trying to enforce social distancing in areas where population density is around 10-20,000 per square km, be it Poonthura in Thiruvananthapuram or Chellanam in Ernakulam. Their lives are socially much more connected. They live in houses next to each other, and when men set out to the seas and disappear for days, the women depend on each other and maintain a support system, he says. Community leaders say while planning Covid prevention and control measures, the authorities will have to consider the fact that they have been facing uncertainties all through their lives and have been struggling for their share of growth benefits.

“The primary health centres in coastal areas are closed by afternoon. For any emergency, people have to rush to cities. Awareness programmes have to be scheduled in such a way that local populace can attend them. Our work hours are different. For days, we are away from the shore. Half the time, we are completely disconnected with what's happening around us, until we are informed specifically, says T Peter, secretary, national fish workers' union. “Unlike in the other places, Covid rules were not strictly implemented in fishing harbours and landing centres. It should have been managed by fisheries department, police, healthcare and administration. Purushan, who has travelled across coastal areas in the state, mentions an incident narrated to him by a teacher who used to teach at a school in Puthiyappa in Kozhikode some years ago. “The class was going on when suddenly we heard people shouting about a fishing boat approaching the shore. All the children in the class rushed out to welcome the boat. Later, they came back after the catch was hauled in. She said the students didn't mean any disrespect. It is their natural reaction! Fisheries officials say it is very difficult to enforce social distancing in landing centres. “Once a boat arrives, hordes of people just rush in. They don't care about anything else at the time. And it will all get over in a few hours, said a senior official with the

fisheries. But Peter points out that in some places authorities were able to impose social distancing after making people aware of the dangers.

“We implemented it in Thangassery fishing harbour and it was very successfully managed by community members themselves, he says. Things have been taking a turn for the worse for the community for the past couple of years. “You have to understand that in the past one year, there has been severe sea surges, unusual rainfalls, and cyclones. Our fishing days have been reduced and livelihoods have taken a hit. On top of the that, lockdown kicked in. Fish is our food and livelihood. We don't have both. So, when the landing centres opened, everybody wanted to be a part of it, says Charles George, state president, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Union. There is a lot of unrest among the coastal communities over income loss, huge debts and fear of collapsing catches. “There are protests and strikes going on in several places. We are ready to follow government's rules, but when there is no income, people will try to go out. We have been seeking a monthly income till the on-going crisis continues, says Charles. There is no denying that this community is one of the biggest unorganized ‘security group' guarding the state's entire stretch of coastline. If you go to the coastal area, the first time, people will just look at you and go about their business. The second time, a few will come and make enquiries. But if you are seen again in the area, they will surround and ask all your details. They will alert the authorities too. The Corona pandemic is a new phenomenon, the dangers of which have not really penetrated this community that is resilient to rise every time a natural disaster strikes them. If they are to be kept safe, it can only be done through participatory management.

Kerala: Illegal Chinese nets in Vembanad dismantled

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/illegal-chinese-nets-in-vembanad-dismantled/article32131562.ece/amp/

"The array of lights that illuminated the southern coast of the Vembanad lake at night have finally gone off. The prolonged battle against unauthorised fishing in the waterbody reached a major milestone with the Fisheries Department dismantling as many as 80 illegal Chinese fishing nets installed on the southern side of the Thannermukkam Barrage. Most of the nets, according to the officials, cropped up over the last two decades and were operated by the local residents. “In view of the complaints from conventional fishermen, we have dismantled 80 out of the 83 Chinese nets that were installed without registration and licence under the Kerala Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Act, 2010. The remaining three nets will be cleared as and when the stay order by a court against dismantling them expires, said K.B. Ramesh, Deputy Director of Fisheries, Kottayam. Officials said the fishing nets without licence used small-mesh nets as against the stipulated mesh size of 20 mm. “This often triggered protests by the conventional fishermen, who often accused the Chinese net operators of posing a threat to the inland fishing sector as a whole.

At times, it also snowballed into direct confrontation between the two sections, said an official. To make sure that the illegal operators do not return to the spot, the department has launched patrolling operations around the waterbody. Earlier attempts by the department to forcibly dismantle these unauthorised nets had to be called off following protests staged by the net operators. This time, however, they had to fall in line in view of heavy police security. K.G. Padmakumar, director, International Research and Training Centre for Below Sea Level Farming, said the presence of Chinese nets having high-voltage LED bulbs had a disastrous impact on the fish stock especially when the shutters of the barrage were open. “While the artificial lights were used to draw the fish stock, the small-meshed nets ensured that not even juvenile fish are spared, he said. He attributed the cropping up of illegal Chinese nets to lack of regulation by the agencies concerned. “While the presence of authorised nets is an effective deterrent against illegal operators, this particular location do not have even a single operator with licence to check these activities, he said.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: 58 Indian fishermen repatriated from Iran after 4 months of no work, pay

https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/coronavirus-58-indian-fishermen-repatriated-from-iran-after-4-months-of-no-work-pay-2263178 "58

Indian fishermen, who were stranded in Iran for over four months without work and wages amid the coronavirus pandemic, arrived in Delhi today. Their return was made possible by the generosity of International Maritime Federation's Chairman Sanjay Prashar, who paid for their tickets within days of getting an SOS call and ""hard lobbying"", according to Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor. ""The mental and physical exhaustion on their faces is evident. They now have to get on a connecting flight,"" the team that helped these fishermen - 18 from Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram and 40 from Tamil Nadu - reach home said. The fishermen were brought to the Tehran airport in a bus on July 14. They landed in Delhi today around 3AM through Mahan Airways, which has been operating flights under the government's Vande Bharat Mission to repatriate Indians stranded abroad. Earlier this year, the 18 fishermen from Kerala's coastal village of Vizhinjam left for Iran for the first time to work on fishing vessels for private employers. ""I had paid Rs 50,000 to my agent to get to Iran. Each of us from Kerala had paid that amount. I even mortgaged my wife's wedding necklace (tali) for this. I am returning with nothing. I had to borrow from friends to be able to eat even one meal a day. I now need to pay off this debt,"" Aruldas, 36, who could only manage to work for 10-12 days, told NDTV. Melbai V, 50, could only manage to work for four days before being left jobless. ""We were not even paid for the work that we had manage to do.

We were told that our employer could not sell fish in Dubai because of the lockdown."" he said. Mr Melbai's two sons in Thiruvananthapuram are in the same boat as their father's. They too

have not been able to catch or sell anything for months because of the temporary ban on fishing activities in the district to avoid large gatherings. Congress's Mr Tharoor, who had worked closely with the Ministry of External Affairs for the return of about 600 Indians, mostly fishermen, from Iran in June, said bringing these men back was a huge challenge."I have been in touch with Foreign Minister S Jaishankar all through... The Embassy helped evacuate a first batch on an Indian Navy ship, but there was no room for this last group. We again worked with the External Affairs Ministry and the Embassy, lobbied hard for these fishermen to be put on a plane. Then came the question of the cost of their tickets, which Capt. Parashar met out of his own resources. Throughout this period, I have received dozens of messages, videos and voicenotes from the fishermen detailing their desperate situation. I am delighted they are home safe at last,"" Mr Tharoor told NDTV."The 40 fishermen from Tamil Nadu were living in two rooms; 20 each in each room. They would eat one or two meals in a day. It was a tough time for them and they had little hope of ever returning until the repatriation flight worked out,"" L Praveen Kumar, the General Secretary of Maritime People's Welfare Association told NDTV. It was Mr Kumar who made an SOS call to Mr Prashar about the possibility of helping repatriating these stranded fishermen. ""Within five working days, the arrangements were made and tickets sponsored,"" he said. ""The fishermen who arrived today... have been having a harrowing time. When I was a captain on big ships and would see our fishermen brothers on the sea, I would always be struck by their guts. I am happy that I could help them. After all, we all are Indians,"" Mr Prashar told NDTV. Drawing attention to the challenging conditions in which Indian fishermen work to make ends meet, Mr Tharoor said, ""I have been repeatedly calling on the government for a relief package for the fishing community. It is time the country wakes up to the huge problems these poor people face."

Kerala: With harbours closed, fishers in dire straits

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/with-harbours-closed-fishers-in-dire-straits/article32084772.ece

"The closure of fish landing centres and sales hubs attached to them in the wake of COVID-19 spread has made life miserable for the fishing community, which is already going through an unusually lean fishing season. The spread of COVID-19 has led to all major harbours and their fish markets being shut down. Though the Thoppumpady harbour had closed for the trawl ban season, the market at the harbour has been closed as the area is now a containment zone. Chellanam mini fishing harbour and Munambam too are locked down. The Kalamukku fishing harbour and wholesale centre is closed. Smaller landing centres like the ones at Fort Kochi and Kamalakkadavu too are closed, leaving no option for the fishers to sell their catch. Financial trouble At least half the 7.50 lakh fishers in the State was in serious trouble following the lockdown in coastal areas, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi on Tuesday. He said there was no ban on fishing but all the markets were closed

and the fishermen did not know what to do with their catch. P.V. Jayan of Kerala Parambaragatha Matsya Thozhilali Samithi said that the government should take steps to ensure that fishers had an opportunity to sell their catch as they were in serious financial trouble.

Online sale Meanwhile, fishermen, especially those owning small boats, have started online sale of their catch. Around eight boats that ventured out on Monday sold 1,000 to 1,200 kg of shrimp at prices ranging between Rs.160 and Rs.190 a kg, said Mr. Jayan. It was a good move as middlemen were being excluded gradually. The govenrment must organise online sales in a bigger way with the help of agencies like Matsyafed, added Mr. Jayan. There are around 500 small fibre and traditional boats based at Chellanam harbour. Kalamukku is base to around 60 large inboard engine fishing boats. The harbour is also one of the biggest wholesale centres for fish in the district. There are around 12 large inboard boats operated by fishermen settled between Chellanam and Fort Kochi. All these boats are unable to land anywhere between Chellanam and Munambam. The only option was the Azheekkal harbour, but there had been objection from some quarters against the harbour being used by fishermen from areas that had reported rapid COVID-19 spread, said Mr. Charles. The community leaders said that the government must bring in strict control over both fishing activities and sales so that the present crisis could be overcome at least temporarily.

Kerala: Govt. mulls permitting fishing in a controlled way

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/govt-mulls-permitting-fishing-in-a-controlled-way/article32068373.ece

"With coastal livelihoods hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns triggering unrest in places like Poonthura, the government is looking at whether fishing can be allowed in a controlled environment without diluting disease containment protocols in the thickly populated and vulnerable coastal belt. Meantime, District Collectors have been directed to tighten safety measures in the coastal areas, given the recent spike in cases. The Fisheries Department has proposed that fishers may be allowed to operate in the sea regions close to their villages, but on condition that the COVID-19 safety measures are strictly observed at work and in the coastal areas. “It would allow them to remain in their own localities and go to work. We have given a detailed note to the Chief Minister in this regard. A decision is expected in a day or two, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma said.

Minimum contact The proposals are designed to ensure minimum contact among the coastal residents and outsiders to prevent a possible spread of the disease. Several coastal areas in five districts were scheduled to go under a triple lockdown from 6 p.m. on Monday (July 13) till 6 p.m. on July 23. If the proposals are waved through, boats would be allowed to venture out under an odd-even scheme on alternate days based on their registration numbers. The system

would automatically reduce the number of fishing craft operating on a given day by half, enabling better management in the harbours, the Minister said. Catch at fixed prices The department has also suggested that the system introduced successfully at the Neendakara harbour in Kollam can be replicated in other places for the successful marketing of the catch. Auctions would stand banned at the harbours to prevent crowding. Instead, traders can purchase the catch at prices fixed by the Matsyafed. “Traders can contact the harbours, register in advance and place their orders. They should also inform the harbour authorities beforehand regarding the details of the vehicles. Only one vehicle would be allowed inside at a time, the Minister said. Whether any coastal region should go under lockdown has to be decided by the District Collectors concerned, the Minister said. “We cannot say beforehand whether a region should be locked down or not. The Collectors should declare it after assessing the situation in a given region. The government's direction is that our preventive measures should be strengthened without allowing any loopholes, she said. Triple lockdown On Sunday, the government declared triple lockdowns in critical containment zones on the coast till 6 p.m. on July 23. These included Manikyavilakom, Poonthura and Puthenpalli in Thiruvananthapuram; Chavara and Panmana in Kollam; Pattanakkad, Kadakarapally, Cherthala South, Mararikulam North, Kodamthuruth, Kuthiyathode, Thuravur and Arattupuzha in Alappuzha; Chellanam in Ernakulam; and Veliyamcode, Perumpadappa, Ponnai municipality and Thanur municipality in Malappuram. Some of these areas were already under triple lockdown.

Kerala: Chellanam residents seek lasting steps against sea erosion

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/chellanam-residents-seek-lasting-steps-against-sea-erosion/article32081346.ece

"Residents of the coastal village of Chellanam have sought more permanent measures like erection of tetrapods to prevent sea erosion and consequent flooding of homes on a long-term basis, as the geo textile tube laying project is yet to be completed even after three years of efforts. Tetrapods are ‘four-legged' concrete structures that can resist sea waves and coastal erosion. The demand was raised in the wake of heavy flooding of around 50 homes recently following a sea swell. Two houses were severely damaged, and residents came out of their homes to protest even as three wards of the panchayat have been classified as red zones to contain COVID-19 spread. K.V. Thomas, former head of the Coastal Processing Group at the National Centre for Earth Sciences Studies, echoed the feelings of Chellanam residents when he said that both immediate and long-term measures were needed to save lives. According to him, geo textile tube laying is only a temporary measure, and a long-term study, which may take over two years, is needed to generate data for a long-term strategy to contain sea erosion and protect lives and property. T.A. Dalphine of Paschima Kochi Theera Samrakshana Samiti said people were tired of official apathy.

The COVID-19 situation has made their lives even more miserable. There is also a prediction of rain getting more intense and the sea turning rough. Charles George, veteran fisheries union leader, said the problem of Chellanam went back a hundred years, and that no strategy appeared to have been drawn up to help the residents. There have been substantial changes in the flow of currents and tides over the last hundred years. Serious coastal erosion and flooding have several reasons, and developmental activity over the last more than 100 years, including dredging, is one among them. Dr. Thomas said ideas like recreation of the natural beach, being experimented in Cuddalore and Puducherry, and depositing dredged materials in an area needed to be explored. He added that data generation was important in developing a model.

Kerala: Ernakulam faces fish shortage as harbours, markets remain shut

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/ekm-faces-fish-shortage-as-harbours-mkts-remain-shut/articleshow/76929084.cms

"The closure of four major fishing harbours and three main markets in Ernakulam in view of the spike in Covid-19 cases has led to fish shortage in the district. Any fish coming in are being sold on roadsides or at smaller markets. Fisheries department officials said that there was no other option but to close down as landing centres and fishing harbours are places where people gather and it is very difficult to control crowd when catches are brought in. The district administration and health department had closed down the four harbours Munambam, Kalamukku, Thoppumpady and Chellanam due to the fear of community spread. The main markets Ernakulam, Aluva and Chembakkara which are also the wholesale points for fish being brought from different landing centres have also been closed. With these main points closed, traditional fishermen will probably sell their catch in smaller markets or in unorganized sale points. “We didn't have any other option. Since there is no total fishing ban as such, whatever catch the traditional fishermen get from the coastal waters and inland waters will be sold. They will be able to get some good price because right now we cannot allow any organized sale because of the possibility of crowding. In a fish landing centre, it is virtually impossible to prevent crowding.

The department had been working with the police but we could not control it much. Closure for some days is the only option now since positive cases have been reported from the fishing community, said fisheries department joint director (central zone) M S Saju. “Lots of people who were at Kalamukku were really scared because in the landing centre, nobody can stay away when boats or trucks arrive with catches. Now, some fish will be available because a few of the traditional fishermen are going. Prices also will shoot up, but it can't be helped in the present condition, he said. The fisheries sector in the state has been bearing the brunt of fall in marine catches for some time now. A study on the economic impact on fisheries sector during the lockdown period by researchers at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)

put the daily loss at Rs 58 crore in the state. The total accumulated loss in terms of fish catch, landing centre and retail value realization as well as loss in export revenue was estimated at Rs 3,481 crore. The per day loss of fish catch was estimated at 14,000 tonnes while the retail centre value realization was estimated at Rs 44.8 crore per day amounting to Rs 2,690 crore in 60 days.

Kerala: Ban deepens crisis for fisherwomen

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/jul/10/ban-deepens-crisis-for-fisherwomen-2167748.html

"The suspension of fishing activities along the coast have added to the miseries of fisherwomen due to Covid-19. The pandemic has put a question mark on the livelihood of several fisher families. The earnings by women has a major role in the financial stability of the family, said secretary of Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF) in Thiruvananthapuram, Janet Cletus. Compared to other districts, Thiruvananthapuram has more number of women involved in selling fish. The fishing activities were stopped on Wednesday as a measure to contain the pandemic in the coastal areas, particularly in Poonthura where more people have been infected.

According to Janet, the measures taken by the government to enforce lockdown had been effective in Poonthura and nearby locations. “A majority of people in the coastal villages are involved in fishing. This is why there is a low adherence to Covid-19 protocols in the coastal areas, she said. As the number of young men turning to fishing in coast now also have a threat to their livelihood from their own community. “These are the men who have returned from Gulf countries or those who have lost job, said Janet. “They have taken over the sales on the road side and thereby turning away customers from fish markets where women have been selling fish for long, she said. In a fishermen family, there will be atleast one woman involved selling fish. T he savings are set aside for loan repayment, education and marriage of their children. According to KSMTF, the indebtedness have increased in the coastal region with few options for repayment ever since the lockdown was imposed. Valerian Isaac, a fishermen leader, said the lack of availability of fish was one of the major reasons by people take the risk of going to Kanyakumari for purchasing fish. One of the fish vendors turned out to be a source of infection and those who contracted the infection included fish selling woman in the local market.

Kerala: Many fishermen families decline to join relocation scheme

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/many-fishermen-families-decline-to-join-relocation-scheme/article32007299.ece

"The “Punargeham project, introduced by the State government for the relocation of

fishermen residing along coastal areas which are prone to sea erosion, has not found favour with many of the beneficiaries identified in Kozhikode district. The scheme which was officially launched the other day in Vadakara taluk, includes just 14 families in the first phase. Though the year-long groundwork for the scheme identified around 550 fishermen families, 308 families declined to join the scheme owing to its alleged flaws. As of now, only 242 families have expressed their willingness to accept the scheme in various taluks in Kozhikode district.

Though there are 66 fishermen families in Vadakara taluk who are ready to change their coastal houses, it is likely to take years to accomplish their dream. The first 14 families selected for the scheme too will have to wait for months to get their houses constructed on the found 50 cents of land identified for the purpose. In Koyilandy taluk, there are 78 families that have expressed their willingness to cooperate with the scheme and shift from their houses. However, the project implementation is moving at a snail's pace. The same is the case with Kozhikode taluk where 98 families have expressed their willingness to cooperate with the scheme. A suitable parcel of land is yet to be identified for the majority of applicants. Though the scheme offers a financial aid of Rs.10 lakh for a family to purchase the land and construct the house, the majority of the fishermen families consider the amount too small considering the increasing price of land and construction materials. Proposals related to land pooling and construction of flats to meet this challenge are yet to make any progress in the urban area. Leaders of fishermen organisations say the shifting of their houses from the coastal area to a remote place is hardly a practical idea as it will affect their vocation and life around harbours.

Kerala: Vigil stepped up in Kozhikode against arrival of fishers from other States

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/vigil-stepped-up-in-kozhikode-against-arrival-of-fishers-from-other-states/article31982321.ece

"Police and Health Department squads have intensified vigil around fishing harbours in Kozhikode following complaints from local residents that fishers from other States were enjoying unrestricted entry into harbours, derailing safety arrangements taken to fight COVID-19. One such incident, in which a group of fishermen who were reportedly brought to Chaliyam from Tamil Nadu by local boat owners, had been brought to the notice of the authorities. Officials said the labourers who were found staying in a rented building near the Chaliyam fish landing centre had been asked to follow quarantine rules.

According to the complainants, there were about 12 such persons and they tried to roam around the place, throwing quarantine rules to the wind. The complainants also alleged that the labourers were from hotspots in Tamil Nadu. However, the Health Department authorities did not disclose the details of the workers. The increasing rush in Koyilandy harbour, which emerged as a main trade point with the closure of many other harbours following the lockdown,

too has been brought to the notice of the Health Department and the police. Boat owners from the area said small-scale and large-scale buyers were carelessly gathering at the spot without following physical-distancing norms. There were also people who came to the spot without wearing masks and washing their hands, they said. Meanwhile, the Koyilandy police said they had taken steps to prevent the entry of buyers and sellers from containment zones. They said only people from Koyilandy taluk would be permitted to enter the harbour area. The office of the Fisheries Deputy Director also informed that the entry of fish wholesale and retail traders from other taluks or containment zones to the harbour would not be permitted. Those defy the orders would be booked under the Epidemic Diseases Act, officials said.

Kerala: Famous Kerala Sardine Fish catch falls lowest in the past two decade

https://krishijagran.com/animal-husbandry/famous-kerala-sardine-fish-catch-falls-lowest-in-the-past-two-decade/

"The famous Indian oil sardine and staple fish of Kerala have recorded the lowest catch, was a major factor behind the decline. The catch of oil sardine recorded lowest in the two-decade to 44,320 tonnes in 2019, says the annual report of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) for 2019. Fish production in Kerala declined by 15.4 percent to touch 5.44 lakh tonnes in 2019, nearly 1 lakh tone is less than the prior year when the production was 6.43 lakh tonnes in 2018 attributed this fall to unfavorable conditions in ocean and environment. The warming of the Arabian Sea due to the El Nino South Oscillation affected the catch in the last one decade. The catch of sardine touched all 3.9 lakh tonnes in 2012 later dropped to 45,958 tonnes in 2016. The low catch of sardine in 2019 raised the fish price in the state from Rs 100 to Rs 300 for a kilogram. “The oil sardine landings continued to decline for the past two years (2018 and 2019), all thanks to the unfavourable changes in the ocean environment. After analyzing the correlation between the ocean environment and biological cycle of the oil sardine, the CMFRI had forecasted in January 2018 that sardine would be declined in 2019 in Kerala waters, the report stated.

According to the new CMFRI data released India's fish landing stood at 35.6 lakh tonnes, a marginal increase of 2.1 percent to the prior year. Tamil Nadu topped with 7.75 lakh tonnes catch, Gujarat stood at second place with7.49 lakh tonnes. The CMFRI data showed a worrying sign of a sharp increase in the finding of commercially unimportant fish red toothed triggerfish, which has very less demand was caught 2.74 lakh tonnes from 72,000 tonnes in 2018. The states which saw an increase in the recorded catch are West Bengal by 55 percent then Andhra Pradesh 34 percent, Odisha saw an increase of 14.5 percent, Karnataka by 11 percent, while states which saw decreased landing when compared to the previous year are Maharashtra at 32 percent and Goa at 44 percent.

Clash breaks out at fish market in Kerala, India, over COVID19, weather warnings

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/clash-breaks-out-at-chaliyam-fish-market/article31993673.ece

"A group of local fishermen on Sunday locked horns over the alleged violation of lockdown regulations at Chaliyam fish landing centre in Kozhikode in the south Indian state of Kerala. Tension prevailed in the area when a section of fishermen opposed the move of some of the other fishermen groups to venture into the sea ignoring the warning of the Fisheries Department. The protesters who blocked the attempt claimed that those who tried to proceed to the sea were ignoring the alerts issued by the Meteorological Department regarding rough weather conditions. They also accused the rivals of violating social distancing rules and other curbs introduced along the coastal area for preventing COVID-19 infection. The situation was brought under control with the intervention of policemen from various stations. Some of the fishers suffered minor injuries in the police action. They alleged that the police were trying to manhandle the protesters without understanding the issue. A few days ago, there was a similar incident in which the local fishermen foiled the attempt of some of the boat owners to resume fishing with the support of migrant workers. Following the complaint, the police had put the migrant workers under quarantine. The area was volatile ever since.

Kerala and Italian marines case: Denied justice, but legal fight not in our hands, say fishermen kin

https://indianexpress.com/article/india/kerala-denied-justice-but-legal-fight-not-in-our-hands-say-fishermen-kin-6489246/

"“We were denied justice. But, I don't want to see them face punishment for having killed my husband… I have pardoned them, but the Indian government can decide on the future course of action," said Dora, wife of Valentine, one of the two fishermen shot dead off Kerala coast in 2012, allegedly by two Italian marines. The Court of Arbitration in The Hague has ordered that Italian marines Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone will not be tried in India but will face proceedings in Italy. Dora, who got a government job as a peon on compassionate grounds after Valentine's death, said, “The governments are deciding on legal matters. Our government can go ahead with whatever step they intend to do. But I have pardoned the marines. I don't want to see them face punishment. I won't get back my husband. In the name of God, I have forgiven them. Why should I invite their curse on my children?' Dora's eldest son Derrick said they were “denied justice, but they have limited options. “The legal fight is not in our hands. We only learn about verdicts." In 2013, a year after the fishermen were killed, the Italian government gave the two families a compensation of Rs 1 crore each after they

withdrew their affidavits in the court against its plea, seeking quashing of the FIR against the marines. Dora said she is now building a house on land bought with a portion of the compensation. “I do not want to send my sons to the sea," she said. At Eraviputhenthurai village in Tamil Nadu's Nagercoil district, a relative of Ajeesh Pinku, the other fisherman killed in firing, is at a loss. “I am not happy… But, we are helpless," said the victim's aunt Janet Marry. Ajeesh lost his parents years before his death and Janet brought up him and his two sisters. “The compensation was deposited in the names of two sisters. I don't know how to take forward the legal fight," said Janet.

Kerala CM writes to PM Modi in Italian marines case, says ‘build international pressure for fair trial in Italy’

http://www.businessworld.in/article/Kerala-CM-writes-to-PM-Modi-in-Italian-marines-case-says-build-international-pressure-for-fair-trial-in-Italy-/05-07-2020-294129/

"The Kerala Chief Minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking the Indian Government to build international pressure for a fair trial in Italy in connection with the shooting of two Indian fishermen by Italian marines off the Kerala coast in 2012. The letter addressing the Prime Minister read, ""I invite your kind attention to the award of the International Tribunal on Law of the Sea (ITLOS) wherein, it has been stated that India has the right to receive compensation for the loss of life, physical harm and material damage in the case in which two of our countrymen lost their precious lives in an act of indiscriminate shooting by two Italian mariners on February 15, 2012. Though the ITLOS has upheld our right to compensation, it has unfortunately been held that the crime cannot be tried in Indian courts.""""It is quite shocking that such a grave crime committed against our citizens is not being brought to justice in our country. The matter definitely deserved a more sensitive and cautious handling from the beginning and during the proceedings in the ITLOS, as it involved the loss of life of two innocent Indians.

Whatever be the technicalities of the international conventions, the decision of the ITLOS has resulted in added grief to the bereaved families and people of Kerala. I wish to convey our strong feelings in this issue,"" the letter read."If the award of the Arbitral Tribunal is not appealable as stated by the Central Government in the affidavit filed before the Hon'ble Supreme Court, Government of India should take earnest efforts to build international pressure for a fair trial in Italy,"" it read. The letter further read, ""As two valuable lives have been lost without any provocation from the victims, we need to bargain for an exemplary amount. We should also keep our option of approaching the ITLOS within the stipulated time of one year if getting adequate compensation is not possible through negotiations. Though trial of the perpetrators of the crime in India have escaped their trial in India, all other possible actions need to be taken.""""I request the intervention of your goodself in the matter so that possible

justice is rendered to two of our countrymen who lost their lives while on the seas to earn their livelihood,"" it added. The Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague in the Netherlands had on Thursday given its decision saying that the Italian marines - Massimiliano Latorre and Salvatore Girone -- will not be tried in India. The Arbitration Court had ruled that India is entitled to claim compensation from Italy and observed that the two marines had violated international law and, as a result, Italy breached India's freedom of navigation, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. However, the tribunal held that the marines are entitled to immunity and precluded India from exercising its jurisdiction over them. The Centre told the Apex Court that it accepts and abides by the international tribunal's decision in the killings of two fishermen by Italian Marines. The Tribunal has ruled for a trial of Marines in Italy. According to Indian prosecution, on February 15, 2012, two Indian fishermen were killed off the coast of Kerala by the two Italian marines on-board the Italian-flagged commercial oil tanker MV Enrica Lexie.

Kerala: KSDMA prepares database of boats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/ksdma-prepares-database-on-boats/article31926298.ece

"Among the most enduring images from the devastating Kerala floods of 2018 and 2019 were those of fishing boats racing across the floodwaters in a frantic search for stranded families. Acknowledging the importance of boats in flood-time search-and-rescue operations, the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) has now made an inventory of vessels available in all 14 districts. Efforts have been taken to compile data on all privately owned craft, ranging from small wooden canoes to houseboats to mechanised and non-mechanised fishing boats from the coast, KSDMA officials said on Friday. “The inventory was taken with the help of the Police Department. We are not claiming that it is a complete list, but now we have an idea of what type of boats are available under each police station limits, Sekhar L. Kuriakose, member secretary, KSDMA, said. The extensive use of boats in the rescue operations in 2018 and 2019 had prompted the KSDMA to prepare the inventory. The advantage being that these valuable resources can be quickly mobilised by agencies involved in rescue operations during an emergency.

Further, the Monsoon Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan brought out by the KSDMA after the 2018 floods requires government agencies to maintain a database on boats available locally along with the mobile phone numbers of their owners. Earlier this week, the KSDMA had published an inventory of various types of buildings that can be put to good use during emergencies. A consolidated inventory of schools (government and aided), ITIs, hostels, auditoriums, hotels and stadiums across the State were recently uploaded on sdma.kerala.gov.in, the officials website of the KSDMA. It features the databases of the

structures accompanied by maps. The Public Works Department (PWD) has examined the majority of these buildings and validated them for various uses during an emergency, according to the authority.

Kerala: Fish production falls in Kerala, sardine catch lowest in 20 years

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/jul/01/fish-production-falls-in-kerala-sardine-catch-lowest-in-20-years-2163667.html

"Kerala's fish production declined by 15.4 per cent to touch 5.44 lakh tonnes in 2019, from 6.43 lakh tonnes in 2018, raising concerns about depleting marine resources. Sharp decline in the catch of oil sardine and Indian mackerel, the two major resources of the state, was the major factor behind the decline. The landing of oil sardine, the state's staple fish, touched a two-decade low of 44,320 tonnes in 2019. The decline has been attributed to the warming of Arabian Sea due to the El Nino South Oscillation effect. The species' catch in Kerala had recorded an all-time high of 3.9 lakh tonnes in 2012 but dropped to 45,958 tonnes in 2016. It climbed to 1.27 lakh tonnes in 2017, before dropping to 77,093 tonnes in 2018. As per the data released by Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) on Tuesday, India's fish landings stood at 35.6 lakh tonnes against 34.9 lakh tonnes in 2018, a marginal increase of 2.1 per cent. Tamil Nadu topped with 7.75 lakh tonnes, replacing Gujarat which slipped to second place with 7.49 lakh tonnes.

The CMFRI data also indicated a worrying trend of a sharp increase in stocks of commercially unimportant fish species. The redtoothed trigger fish, which has little demand in domestic market and is mostly caught for use in feed mills, dominated the landing with 2.74 lakh tonnes nationally, a marked increase from 72,000 tonnes in 2018. The availability of Indian mackerel and oil sardine shrunk by 50 per cent. According to CMFRI, there was no breeding of mackerel and oil sardine along Kerala coast during breeding season this year. The fishing sector also suffered a setback as the number of fishing days reduced due to eight cyclonic storms that disturbed the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. CMFRI director A Gopalakrishnan released the data on Tuesday in the presence of principal scientists T V Sathianandan, Prathibha Rohit, P U Zacharia, P Laxmilatha, E M Abdussamad, C Ramachandran and Josileen Jose. Sector lost I11,652 cr during lockdown The Indian fisheries sector incurred a loss of as much as I11,652 crore in 40 days of the lockdown as fishing activities remained suspended. The sector in Kerala suffered a loss of I3,481 crore during the first 60 days of the lockdown. The figures do not include the loss suffered by the export and post harvest sectors. El Nino affects marine stocks? The El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) causes rise in sea-surface temperature and triggers changes in the ocean's vertical, thermal structure, particularly in coastal regions. According to CMFRI, warming of sea water due to ENSO has depleted stocks of Indian mackerel and oil sardine along north and northwest Indian ocean. This warming led to a decline in fish breeding

of the two species along the coasts of Kerala and Karnataka this year.

Kerala: Fishers welcome new system of sale at harbours

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-welcome-new-system-of-sale-at-harbours/article31964888.ece

"The Chellanam fishing harbour was witness to a historic change in sales this week with the catch being weighed before being sold to wholesale merchants. The price was fixed after the catch was weighed. It is a big break from the past that will help the poor fishers realise better prices and possibly escape a system that did not give them the real value for their efforts. It was a practice up till COVID-19 to sell by making an overall assessment of the catch in a fishing boat as it landed at the harbour. However, fishermen's unions are now insisting that the landings be assessed according to their weight before a price is fixed. This will end the practice of exploiting the fishermen, said T. Peter of National Fish Workers' Forum on Wednesday. T.V. Majeendran of Matysa Thozhilali Federation welcomed the development and said it was a great development and a break from the past. It was the end of a cycle of exploitation, he said. The sale of fish from a landing boat in Chellanam early this week was the culmination of efforts by various agencies to end the system of fixing a price for the catch without assessing the quantity. Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi said the State government had tried to end the practice of fish sales without proper assessment and to free wholesale transactions from the hands of brokers and middlemen. Mr. Majeendran said that the demand for fixing a fair price for the catch had been raised decades ago. However, the call had found resonance now with the traditional fishers now. Mr. Peter said that the example in Chellanam should be replicated in all the fishing harbours across Kerala so that the traditional fishers would escape the cycle of exploitation. He said that the federation supported the new system of sales with the weight of fish being the prime consideration.

Tamil Nadu: TN grabs first position in fish production, Kerala in third spot with 15.4% decline

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/jun/30/tn-grabs-first-position-in-fish-production-kerala-in-third-spot-with-154-decline-2163468.html

"India's marine fishing sector registered a marginal increase of 2.1 per cent in production in 2019 compared to the previous year. However, certain alarming factors including warming of the Indian Ocean have led to decline in stocks of commercially valuable fish species, causing concern among the fishing community. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) on Tuesday released the figures of India's fish production in 2019, which reported a marginal increase in fish landings at the national level. The country's total landings stood at 35.6 lakh tonnes compared to 34.9 lakh tonnes in 2018. Tamil Nadu grabbed the first position

with 7.75 lakh tonnes of landings overtaking Gujarat, which has been leading the table for years. Fish landings in Gujarat declined from 7.80 lakh tonnes in 2018 to 7.49 lakh tonnes in 2019. Kerala retained third position with 5.44 lakh tonnes but total fish landings declined from 6.43 lakh tonnes in 2018 to 5.44 lakh tonnes in 2019. The data indicated a worrying feature of a sharp increase of stocks of commercially unimportant fish species. The red-toothed trigger fish, which has little demand in the domestic market and is mostly caught for the purpose of feed mills, dominated the landings with 2.74 lakh tonnes. The landings of the species stood at 72,000 tonnes in 2018.

Warming of the Indian Ocean due to the El Nino factor has led to a steep decline of commercially valuable fish species along the Indian coastline. While the availability of the Indian mackerel and oil sardine shrunk by 50 per cent, there was a steep rise in the stocks of red-toothed trigger fish which is used only for fish meal. According to the CMFRI, there was no breeding activity of mackerel and oil sardine along the Kerala coast during the breeding season this year. The Indian mackerel, which was in the first spot with 2.84 lakh tonnes of landings in 2018, suffered the biggest setback with a decline of 43 per cent. While West Bengal recorded a 55 per cent increase in landings, Andhra Pradesh reported a 34 per cent increase. Odisha's catch grew by 14.5 per cent and Karnataka's landings climbed by 11 per cent while Tamil Nadu's catch shot up by 10.4 per cent.

Meanwhile, the catch in Goa shrunk by 44 per cent and Maharashtra's share declined by 32 per cent. Kerala reported a reduction of 15.4 per cent compared to the previous year with a total of 5.44 lakh tonnes. Ribbon fish with 2.19 lakh tonnes climbed to the second position in landings followed by penaeid prawns with 1.95 lakh tonnes and non-penaeid prawns with 1.80 lakh tonnes. The fishing sector suffered a setback as the number of fishing days declined due to eight cyclonic storms that disturbed the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. Six of the eight storms were very severe and the West Coast was worst affected by the suspension of fishing activities. A sharp decline in the catch of oil sardine and Indian mackerel, the two major resources of the state, was the major factor that brought down fish production in Kerala. Oil sardine dropped to a meagre 44,320 tonnes, the lowest catch in two decades, while the landings of Indian mackerel plunged to 40,554 tonnes witnessing a steep decline of 50 per cent compared to the previous year. In 2012, the catch of oil sardine touched a record high with 3.9 lakh tonnes. Since then, the state has been witnessing a substantial decrease in catch every year, though there was a slight increase in 2017. The oil sardine landings again continued to decline for the past two years thanks to the unfavourable changes in ocean environment.

After analysing the correlation between the ocean environment and biological cycle of the oil sardine, the CMFRI had forecast in January last year that sardine landings would decline in Kerala waters. The contribution of Kerala towards the overall landings in the country reduced to 15.3 per cent from 18.4 per cent in 2018. Anchovies with 74.194 tonnes topped the list of the

most landed resources in the state followed by red-toothed trigger fish (62,782 tonnes) and penaeid prawns (46,615 tonnes). The estimated value of marine fish based on price at landing centres stood at Rs 60,881 crore in 2019 registering a 15.6 per cent increase. The unit price per kg of fish at landing centre rate was Rs 170.5. At the retail level, the estimated value of marine fish rose to Rs 92,356 crore. The unit price at the retail market level was Rs 258.7. The producers' share stood at 66 per cent while it was 70 per cent in Kerala. CMFRI Director A Gopalakrishnan released the documents in Kochi on Tuesday. Principal scientists T V Sathianandan, Prathibha Rohit, P U Zacharia, P Laxmilatha, E M Abdussamad, C Ramachandran and Josileen Jose were present.

Kerala: A rights based approach to development: Kerala's marine fishing communities by John Kurien

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWsVmwTThw8&feature=youtu.be

"He recalled the circumstances that led him to explore the life problems of working people for the first time in his youth. John Kurien begins this sermon. It was a turning point in his life when he realized that the process of selling fish by sea to fishermen was difficult and that the fishermen had no rights over their products. He says that he learned three things about development from this experience - one, identifying people's self-esteem, not what they need but self-reliance. Second, try to find people's real and basic needs rather than their temporary needs. Through this process, people become active subjects in development. Third, ensure their active participation in any decision that touches people's lives. This will lead to collective empowerment of the people. These lessons were taught by a bishop who was involved in the fishermen's organization. This is closely related to the claim-based approach that Amartya Sen later described. Fishermen in Kerala have long been incapable of detecting and resisting exploitation. They could not organize for their common rights. The Left has little interest in organizing them because they are retail producers. They did not have great leaders capable of social empowerment. For the state, the development of the fisheries sector is the modernization of fishing technology - the creation of cooperatives at the top, export assistance and infrastructure development for coastal fisheries.

It is only after the 1980s that the quality of the fish population has changed. With the help of civil society activists irrespective of caste and creed, they were able to create the first political formation that was really out of the party system in Kerala. Their move was against the application of environmentally damaging technology to fisheries. This experience has taught us that rights-based development is not a gift from top to bottom. But rights-based development requires a diligent social organization and caution. Otherwise the citizens will be reduced from being citizens to beneficiaries. In the case of developmental emergencies, they appear in a variety of ways - in the form of storms, seasickness, tsunamis, and unexpected tides. The

government's response to these is to focus only on short-term reasons - the underlying causes are ignored. The problem is that the fishing community has no right over the coastal land, and that is the most fundamental problem. Even when tsunami funds were plentiful, the government refused to buy enough land for the people.

None of the fishermen's organizations had much to do. It is common for people in the fisheries sector to postpone rights and adopt policies that promote beneficiaries in the face of developmental emergencies. People who are going through a severe crisis and have no other option are left with the attitude. Basic issues are ignored. But there have been some positive changes in the recent past. By 2020, the current LDF government has begun addressing the basic problem of safe shelter for coastal communities. Covid pandemic is the first state of emergency in Kerala's ecosystem. Despite the threat of disease outbreaks in the presence of a large population of coastal dwellers in the Gulf, fortunately this has not happened yet. The state banned harbor-based fishing - as a result of some suggestions and a little pressure. But Kerala was the first state to allow fishing in small, rural villages. This was done by keeping physical distance between the boats and the beach. Seafarers were banned. Some important experiments were carried out in April and May. Only two or three laborers were allowed to fish with small nets in small boats. The prices went unchanged, without auctions and by weight. The token method was implemented for buyers. These experiments yielded mixed results. Setting prices has been very beneficial for fishermen. But in some cases the women involved in fishing were unable to afford the fish - all the fish were bought by big traders. Elsewhere, special quota for women was reserved.

Kerala: Corporation introduces token system for fish markets

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/corp-introduces-token-system-for-fish-markets/articleshow/76538407.cms

"Token system in fish markets and ‘home delivery days' will be introduced in the city as part of measures to curb spread of Covid-19 as cases without evident sources on infection have been reported in the past few weeks. In a meeting of merchants, convened by mayor K Sreekumar here on Tuesday, it was decided that only 50% shops selling fish will be allowed to function on a given day in markets.

Token system will be introduced through contractors who have won auction for fish sales. Street vending of fish will also be regulated. Police help will be sought in regulating entry of people to markets. Supermarkets in shopping malls will be open on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Public entry will be prohibited to supermarkets in malls on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday. These days will be observed as ‘home delivery days' and focus will be on delivering goods at home. Shops selling fruits and vegetables will be open in markets at Chalai and Palayam on Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. Meat shops and provision

stores will also function on alternate days. The arrangements will be in effect for ten days. Mayor K Sreekumar said that if the restrictions could reduce crowding in these areas, another meeting will be convened to discuss relaxations. All shops functioning in the city will have to comply with social-distancing measures. Only those wearing masks shall be allowed to enter shops. In case of violations, steps will be taken to cancel the trade license of shops. Regulations will be in effect in shops selling food at night. Four health squads of the city corporation will be deployed to ensure social distancing in shops. Special arrangements have been made at corporation main office as well. Public are allowed entry to the main office only after initial screening at the counters set up outside the office. Token system will be introduced in the main office. Mayor said that regulations are being effected as part of steps to avoid community spread and to prevent a situation which would necessitate complete lockdown in the city.

Kerala: Major boost for Karimeen production as Kochi complex develops facility for breeding

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/major-boost-karimeen-production-kochi-complex-develops-facility-breeding-126935

"The production of Karimeen or Pearl Spot fish, globally known for its delectable taste and high-yielding market value, has got a major boost with the Multispecies Aquaculture Complex (MAC) of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) in Kochi developing facilities for its commercial-scale breeding and seed production. This facilitates offering a lucrative alternative to fish farmers to grow it round-the-year. MPEDA Chairman K S Srinivas, while inaugurating the sale of the first batch of Karimeen seed produced from MAC here on Friday, said the commercial production would enable farmers to get good quality seeds throughout the year and enhance the production of the fish in the state. In 2010 the Kerala government had declared Karimeen (Etroplus suratensis) as the State Fish to protect this costly fish from over-exploitation, considering its food and economic value and a major attraction of culinary tourism. Cultured in traditional ponds in the state, it commands a high price of Rs 500-600 a kilo. ""The production of Karimeen should be substantially boosted in order to make it a candidate species for export. Nowadays, the farmers are mainly depending on wild caught seeds for culture. Too much dependency on the seeds from the wild will lead to over-exploitation,"" Srinivas said in a release."To overcome this, MPEDA has developed facilities for commercial-scale breeding and seed production for Pearl Spot at its Multispecies Aquaculture Complex at Vallarpadam,"" he added. Pearl Spot is an indigenous fish extensively found along the east and south-west coasts of Peninsular India. It is an important candidate species for aquaculture in ponds, in both brackish water and freshwater.

Kerala: Fishers divided over fishmeal factory proposal

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-divided-over-fishmeal-factory-

proposal/article31901526.ece

"The fisher community is divided over the benefits of a fishmeal factory in the State as recently proposed by Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma. T. Peter of the National Fish Workers' Forum and Jackson Pollayil of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation said on Tuesday that the proposal that a fishmeal unit could be launched under the aegis of the State government was a cause for concern. They called for consistent steps by the government to conserve resources. They said a fishmeal factory would make juvenile fishing a lucrative business. Juvenile fishing had come under consistent criticism as it had been described as a destructive mode in which a lot of value was lost if fishes were not allowed to grow beyond a certain size. However, Xavier Kalapurackal of the Kerala Boat Operators Association said a fishmeal factory would ensure good value for catch even for traditional fishermen. He claimed that oil sardines had become dearer this season and sold for over Rs.200 a kg frequently as a lot of the catch was being diverted to fishmeal factories outside Kerala. He said when there was a surplus of catch most often it was dumped back into the sea. These catch could be utilised for making fishmeal. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute had prescribed minimum legal size for 58 commercially important species in 2014. These included oil sardines, mackerels, scads, rays, etc. The measure was introduced as a conservation step. It was also suggested that fishers should be encouraged to release female crabs carrying eggs as a conservation measure. Meanwhile, department sources said low-value fish caught in Kerala was now being transported to other States for fishmeal production. There were also non-edible fish varieties which could be turned into fishmeal.

Kerala: Declining catches leave smaller boats with scanty earnings

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/declining-catches-leave-smaller-boats-with-scanty-earnings/article31892907.ece?fbclid=IwAR2BgcNUQXDdIQ0i3os3FDpQ8MtqPTWBRLh_daPLnZ3fwEkAtBCcq2pxDSY

"Hit by a steep decline in fisheries resources, smaller boats engaged in fishing have started withdrawing from regular fishing activities off the Kozhikode coast. Though many had hoped to get a decent return with the introduction of the trawling ban and subsequent halting of operations by larger boats, the unexpected decline in the daily catch has come as a rude shock to them. According to fishermen's organisations, the hike in the price of fish in the open market has not fetched them any benefits. The COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent

regulations had stalled the sector and job opportunities in the allied sectors, they claimed. ?In Chombala harbour, only a few smaller boats are now engaged in daily fishing. Of the 300 smaller boats in Chombala harbour, only fewer than 100 are now going into the sea, and that too, on alternate days.? The case is not any different in other fish landing centres and harbours such as Beypore and Puthiyappa. The workers in smaller boats are now in search of other odd jobs to survive the lean season. Their families continue the wait for various government relief measures for alleviating the financial crisis.? The worst-affected by the decline in fishing activities are the workers in the allied sector. Many ice factories operating along the coastal areas have shut down with the fall in their daily sales. The same is the case with small-scale processing units in the coastal areas. Women who worked with such smaller units are now in search of other jobs in their neighbourhood.? Leaders of various fishermen organisations have called upon the State government to speed up the release of welfare funds to support the struggling families. They pointed out that the starting of online lessons and the shortage of required learning tools had placed an additional burden upon many underprivileged fishermen families. ?? Irfan, leader of one of the fishermen associations, said they were in such a bad situation that funds had to be sourced from various charity organisations and individuals to buy television sets for poor fishermen families. “There are many such families which are in need of support in many ways to survive this lean season, he said.

Kerala: Water hyacinths turn a headache for fishermen

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/jun/24/water-hyacinths-turn-a-headache-for-fishermen-2160436.html

"Unabated growth of water hyacinths in Vembanad lake is posing to be a major hindrance to the livelihood of fishermen families living along the banks of the water body. The accumulation of the invasive water plants which are six-feet-deep in certain areas, is making it difficult to navigate the lake. The overgrowth has affected regions of Kumbalam, Edakochi, Thevara and Udayamperoor which are situated along the lake. “More than a quarter of the lake is covered by hyacinths, making it impossible for fishermen to berth their boats. Along with the overgrowth of the weeds, a large amount of mud and silt deposit in the water body prevents propagation of marine life. The number of the freshwater fish species is decreasing in the lake, said V O Johny, district working president of Mathsya Thozhilali Federation (AITUC).

Kumbalam, an island surrounded by Vembanad Lake with a population of 500 fishermen families, has been adversely affected by pollution and the growth of water hyacinths. Locals say that numerous bridges connecting the island with the mainland have also led to the obstruction of the free flow of water, thereby resulting in accumulation of mud and growth of weed. Human intrusion along the banks has contributed to the dire situation.

The Chinese fishing nets that were once set up along the lake too have disappeared due to water hyacinths. “Many of the fishermen in Kumbalam panchayat set out for fishing during low tide. The boats are dragged into the river using ropes moored to stumps in the water body. But the overgrowth has made it difficult for them to tug boats. A landing centre which was constructed for fishermen to store their equipment has been surrounded by hyacinths. Since the overgrowth of the weed blocks the flow of water, families living along the lake are more prone to flooding during the monsoon, said C P Ratheesh, Kumbalam panchayath ward member. According to the panchayat authorities, the removal of hyacinths requires large funds. “Even though partial cleaning is carried out every year, we do not have resources to conduct the large scale cleaning required here, said Seetha Chakrapani, panchayat president. “We have been demanding the formation of a Vembanad Lake Conservation Authority. We also want local bodies to bring in mechanical dredging machines to remove the mud and hyacinths. A package has to be envisaged to save the water body, Johny added. Locals say that numerous bridges connecting the island with the mainland have also led to the obstruction of the free flow of water, thereby resulting in accumulation of weeds and mud. Human intrusion along the banks of the water body too has contributed to a large extent.

Kerala; MPEDA comes to aid production of Kerala’s most popular fish

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/agriculture/agri-news/mpeda-comes-to-aid-production-of-kerala-s-most-popular-fish-1.4843531

"Production of one of Kerala's most popular fish varieties, the Karimeen (Pearl Spot), on Friday got a huge boost with the Marine Products Export Development Authority developing facilities for its commercial scale breeding and seed production. The facility at the Multispecies Aquaculture Complex at Vallarpadam here will offer a lucrative alternative to fish farmers to grow it round the year. In 2010, the Kerala government had declared 'Karimeen' as the 'State Fish' to protect it from overexploitation. Karimeen has always been much in demand fish, especially among the foreign tourists, and the most popular tourist destination at Kumarakom is known for its availability from the Vemband lake. It shot into global prominence after then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee spent his Christmas holidays at Kumarakom two decades back. At Kumarakom, a kilogram of Karimeen costs Rs 600 and upwards. MPEDA Chairman

K.S. Srinivas, while inaugurating the sale of first batch of Karimeen seed produced from MAC, said the commercial production would enable farmers to get good quality seeds throughout the year and enhance the production of the fish in the state. ""The production of Karimeen should be substantially boosted in order to make it a candidate species for export. Nowadays, the farmers are mainly depending on wild caught seeds for culture. Too much dependency on the seeds from the wild will lead to over-exploitation. To overcome this, MPEDA has developed facilities for commercial-scale breeding and seed production at MAC,"" he said.

Kerala: Dull export market proves to be a choppy sea for mechanised trawlers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/dull-export-market-proves-to-be-a-choppy-sea-for-mechanised-trawlers/article31885941.ece

"The Fisheries Department has made arrangements, in adherence to safety protocols to prevent spread of COVID–19 virus, for sale of catches netted by mechanised trawlers from Monday after the ban period ends at the harbours in the coastal districts of delta region, but there are indications that only less number of boats will venture into the sea due to unfavourable conditions. Operators of mechanised trawlers are not convinced about the possibility for reasonable returns for the catches as the export market for the marine products remains dull due to COVID–19 lockdown conditions worldwide. According to officials, the bulk of the catches in the coastal districts gets transported to the processing plants in Kerala from where products like shrimps and squids get exported to other countries. European countries have scaled down and some have even cancelled their earlier orders, leaving exporters in the lurch. Another reason why fish merchants are wary about procuring the catches in large quantities is the struggle being faced by processing units in Kerala due to sudden decline in manpower after exodus of the North Indian labour force to their respective States. Though the lockdown restrictions have been stepped up in Coimbatore district through which the fish loads have to pass, transport will not be a problem since the marine products have also been categorised under essential commodities. “Though the export market is dull, the requirement for marine products will still be on the higher side in Kerala, since there is a requirement for internal consumption what with the 45-day fishing ban period starting in the State from June 15, Joint Director of Fisheries in Nagapattinam district Amal Raj Xavier said. According to a senior official of MPEDA (Marine Products Exports Development Authority), China was the only country where the marine products were exported so far. The current military stand-off between India and China has raised fears among exporters about further decline in overseas market, the official said.

Kerala: How fish markets opened on Facebook and WhatsApp during the lockdown in Kerala’s capital

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/how-fish-markets-opened-on-facebook-

and-whatsapp-during-the-lockdown-in-keralas-capital/article31860503.ece

"Dawn is still many hours away when Jobin Ouseph leaves, at 3 am from his home at Valiyathura, a picturesque coastal village in Thiruvananthapuram district, for the hustle and bustle of the fish auctioneering market at Vizhinjam. There, country boats have landed with the early morning catch. After frenetic bidding, he takes home seer (neymeen) and sailfish (thala). By 7.30 am, the tech-savvy entrepreneur updates his customers about the day's catch on Pachameen, a WhatsApp group with 250 customers. By 10.30 am, he and his cousin are ready to deliver the fish, cleaned and cut. It has been hardly two months since Jobin, son of a fisherman, started Pachameen. The 23-year-old is among several others from the coastal areas in the district who started home delivery of fish when the markets were closed during the lockdown caused by the pandemic. An essential staple for many residents in Kerala's capital city, fish was hard to come by in the initial days of the lockdown. But soon social media was flooded with vendors, who needed just a Facebook page and a WhatsApp number to start home delivery of fresh fish. "It has been my dream to start my own business venture. Having worked with a food delivery service for a year, I knew how to go about it. The lockdown was an opportunity to test the waters and it clicked, says Jobin, a student of MBA.

Siblings Mohammed Rafi and Mohammed Althaf from Vizhinjam too decided to swim with the tide during the lockdown. "With nothing much to do during that period, we decided to sell fish online. Initially, our customers were friends and relatives. But when we realised the business potential of what we had begun, we started posting details on a Facebook page. Although we are only a few weeks old in the business and haven't finalised even a name for it, we have got enough customers to keep it afloat. There has been a surge in the demand for fresh fish after stale fish was confiscated in large quantities. And we cashed in on that opportunity, adds Althaf. In the case of Manoj Henal Silva, founder of Fish Story, it was the disparity in prices that "forced him to start the venture. "My family has been in the fisheries sector for several decades and we have been supplying fish to governmentas well as private enterprises, who also do home delivery. We decided to enter the fray when we realised that, suddenly, there were so many players in the field and they were charging according to their whims and fancies, says Manoj. Besides Vizhinjam, the vendors concentrate on landing centres at Poonthura, Valiyathura and Perumathura. It's not an easy job though.

"Since we don't know when the boats will bring in the fish, we've arranged for people at different landing centres to inform us when the catch arrives. It could be around midnight or in the wee hours of the morning, says Vivek Vijayan, who runs Innathe Pacha Meen with his brothers Vaishak Vijayan and Vishak Vijayan. He adds that Innathe Pacha Meen has tripled its customer base after the lockdown. "We had four WhatsApp groups before the lockdown. Now we have 12. I started this on a trial basis with my brothers a year ago when we were on a break from our jobs in the UAE. Since our father is a fish auctioneer, we had a smooth run and we

decided to stay back. The lockdown has pushed sales beyond our expectations, says 24-year-old Vivek. It's friends and family who pitch in to collect, clean pack and deliver the fish. Cleaning charge is usually ?20 and the delivery charges come in the rage of ?20 to 40, depending on the distance to be covered. Some of them supply the fish in neat plastic containers that have to be cleaned and returned. Meanwhile there are people like Appu R Nair who launched home delivery service of fish to tap into the huge demand for fresh seafood. “We have been planning to roll out a service for sometime now. With people forced to stay indoors during the lockdown, it was not difficult for us to make inroads into the business, says Appu, director of Fish Tales based in Vizhinjam.

Unpredictability factor Regarding the challenges, Vivek points to the unpredictability of the catch. Jobin adds, “There have been days when I didn't bid for any fish because of exorbitant rates. With so many vendors coming in, there is competition at the landing centres. It is better to start on a small scale, Jobin says. Moreover, their rates are often compared with those of fish in the market. “Most of these markets sell stock that comes from Tamil Nadu whereas we supply fresh catch of the day, Vivek points out. Also, there have been instances when traditional fish-sellers have raised objections against online vendors. “These sellers, comprising mainly women, compete among themselves and and naturally they get upset when we end up winning a bid, Jobin says. Some of the newly minted entrepreneurs have plans to expand their network by covering more places in the district. “We are getting enquiries from Attingal and suburbs in the district. So we are working on the logistics, Vivek adds. Now that they have proved that they are no fish out of water when it comes to innovative business practices, all eyes are on them to find out how they develop their enterprises.

Kerala: Fishers’ forums welcome ordinance

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-forums-welcome-ordinance/article31854506.ece

"The National Fish Workers' Forum and Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation have called for government action to end ‘destructive practices' like pelagic trawling and use of high-voltage LED systems to attract fish. The unions said that a ban on such practices would add to measures already being adopted by the government to conserve resources. Jackson Pollayil of the Matsya Thozhilali Federation said that fishers welcomed the recent ordinance on regulating fish auctions, sale and maintenance of quality of catch sold in the market. However, practices like ‘bull' and ‘pair' trawling continued in some places off the coast of Kerala. These need to be ended. T. Peter of the forum said that fishing harbours developed at government expense should not be monopolised for local fishers but there should be facilities accessible to all groups of fishers. They also called on the government to continue stringent action against use of chemicals to preserve fish.

Criminal charges should be brought against the culprits, they said as they called for measures to end the ‘interference' of middlemen in the process of selling catch. The unions said the present laws could ensure better quality fish supplies as well as hygienic condition of fishing harbours and market provided the government stepped in to implement the rules strictly. They also said that agencies like the marine wing of the police was not equipped to control violations in fishing areas. Protest day Meanwhile, Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi has said that it will observe June 22 as a ‘protest day'. The protest action is to highlight demands that include the construction of the Kalamukku fishing harbour. Charles George of the Vedhi said that the government must take action to protect the livelihood of thousands of inland fishers as encroachment of backwaters continued unabated. The waterbodies were suffering serious pollution as well as encroachment, he said here in a statement. The fishers' union reiterated its demand for a financial package to tide over the lockdown period and a crunch in fish catch during the season.

Kerala: Fish farming launched in pond

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fish-farming-launched-in-pond/article31854728.ece

"Fisheries Minister J.Mercykutty Amma inaugurated fish farming as part of the State government's Subhiksha Kerala project for sustainability in agricultural production at the Vayambachira pond in Mannanthala on Wednesday. As many as 5,000 grass carp fishes were deposited in the pond. The pond was renovated as part of the city Corporation's 2019-20 annual plan, at a cost of Rs.25 lakh. An amount of Rs.60 lakh has been sanctioned for preparing a garden and for the construction of an auditorium in the land adjacent to the pond.

Kerala: How a poor fishing hamlet in Kerala is finding it hard to cope with virtual classes

https://english.manoramaonline.com/news/kerala/2020/06/15/kerala-online-class-fishing-hamlet-poonthura-victers-channel-school.html

"The two-storeyed Poonthura Students' Union Library was the only common area where a television has been installed for students without online, smartphone or television access in the largely poor Poonthura fishing hamlet in Thiruvananthapuram. But at 9:30 am on Monday (June 15), the library was found locked. The library is easy to spot. It is near the Poonthura St Thomas Church and is a concrete structure with olive green borders that stands tall and neat among a line of strained-looking tiled houses and shops. The library is on the roadside and behind it is a long assembly line of small concrete fishermen houses that stretches up to the

Poonthura beach. Along the narrow concrete walkway that leads to the houses at the back, children of school-going age, kids expected to be in front of a TV showing Victers Channel classes, were seen screaming, shouting, playing as though the day had thrown up a surprise holiday. We called up the secretary of the library, Jinu, to know why it was locked. “No parent had called us for the morning sessions. But there is one eighth standard boy who wants to attend the 3:30 pm to 4:30 session. So we will open the library by noon for him, Jinu said. When the Library Council asked Jinu to quickly create facilities for virtual classes, a TV was the big worry.

“We had one but it was switched on very rarely, only for sporting events like IPL matches, Jinu said. As expected, it conked out during the trial itself. V S Sivakumar, the MLA of the area, then contributed a new LED TV. Questioning parents Now that they had a new TV, Jinu and friends decided to visit houses where children had no online or television access. But the first responses were enough to dissuade them. “Parents were generally cold to the idea. They said this was no different from a classroom. They wanted to know how we could ensure social distancing in the library, Jinu said. So, they adopted a more detached approach. “We posted information about the virtual class facility in local WhatsApp groups and said that those interested can contact us, Jinu said. There was virtually no response. Sylvastar J, the principal of the St Thomas Higher Secondary School in Poonthura, said he had asked 11 Class 12 students coming from homes with no access to get in touch with Jinu. None of them have. The school itself had informed poor parents that TV access could be granted in the school itself. The parents of one Class 10 girl student had expressed interest. The school had a television installed in a small room and the headmaster was waiting when Onmanorama visited the school on Monday.

The 'First Bell' classes for Class 10 began at 11 am and the girl did not turn up even by 12 noon. Why Poonthura houses are unfit for study Poonthura is a densely populated area with around 1,800-2,000 houses packed so cheek-jammingly close that a song playing in moderate volume on a television in one house can be heard with almost the same clarity by a housewife cutting fish 10 houses away. It is estimated by both the Church and the local authorities that these houses have nearly 4,000 school-going children. Most of them attend government and aided schools in Poonthura and nearby areas but there are also kids who go to big reputed schools in the city. Even if houses in Poonthura have TV or smartphones, they are not conducive for education. “More than one family stays in one house, and because of this one house can have five to six children. And on top of this these families also have the habit of stuffing things like cycles and fishing nets inside these already cramped houses, leaving no space for a common area where the family can sit together and watch TV, said Fr Ratheesh V Rajan, the assistant parish priest of St Thomas Church. “If at all a house has a smart phone, how are the elders going to divide it between five or six children, the priest wondered.

According to him, at least 40 per cent of these houses have no TV or smartphones.

Scramble for palm tops Yet, parents are unwilling to send their children to the library. It is not just the fear of 'social closeness'. Cultural factors are also at play. “Even if they send their sons, no one would want to send their girls to a common facility that is not a school and does not have teachers, said Sherly J, former Poonthura councillor. She has three kids who study in a Kendriya Vidyalaya, far away from the fishing village. Since it is the CBSE syllabus that her children follow, it is not a television but a smartphone that she wants. Sherly has managed to get hold of two smartphones. “Since I have three children and their class timings overlap, they will have to decide among themselves and take turns to miss classes, she said. Smartphones are suddenly in demand in the village. Parents of children doing State syllabus are also after these palm tops as missed Victers Channel classes could be downloaded from YouTube. “Most of the families in this village do not have the money to get a smart phone. Sad thing is mobile phone shops even in our area do not offer the EMI facility for fisherfolk, Sherly said.

Kerala: Licence must for fish seed centres

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/licence-must-for-fish-seed-centres/article31807461.ece

"Fish seed production centres and seed farms in the State should register with the State Fish Seed Centre and obtain licences to operate, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has said. A major step towards ensuring high quality fish seeds to farmers, the decision was meant to prevent the import and sale of low quality fish seeds in the State, Ms. Mercykutty Amma said here on Thursday. Registration and licence were mandatory for hatcheries, fish farms and shops selling ornamental fish species as well, she said. The Centre has been formed on the basis of the Kerala Fish Seed Act, 2014, to ensure availability of quality seeds and to regulate their sale, procurement and export. Imported seeds could be distributed to farmers only after they underwent tests and were certified as disease-free. Institutions and agents selling seeds without licence or registration would attract stern action, the Minister said. Sale of seeds below Rs.1,000 in violation of the regulations would attract a fine of Rs.5,000. If the sale value was above Rs.1,000, the fine would be five times that of the cost of seed. Registration For registration and licence, contact either the State Fish Seed Centre at Thevally, Kollam, (0474-2797188) or the fish farmers development agencies in districts.

Kerala: Jonakapuram reopens to cautious calm

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/jonakapuram-reopens-to-cautious-calm/article31798491.ece

"An uneasy calm prevailed at the Jonakapuram auction centre as Jesus, a boat from Vaddy, unloaded its catch under strict police security on Wednesday. The hall was coming

alive after a long gap of three years as the authorities had to close it down following a communal clash in 2016. While some fishers and residents are highly apprehensive about the new development, the Fisheries Department says it is an essential step since three major harbours in the district are not fully operational owing to COVID-19. "While some centres were struggling to control the crowd and maintain physical-distancing norms, this hall had been lying idle. The government promotes communal harmony and we cannot ban any particular section at a fish-landing centre. We are trying to accommodate maximum boats and provide them a safe environment during the pandemic. The area is under close surveillance and strict action will be taken against miscreants, Minister J. Mercykutty Amma told The Hindu. Residents of nearby fishing villages fear that the situation may turn volatile any moment. "The auction hall was closed for a reason and opening it exploiting the COVID-19 situation is not acceptable. In 2016, two groups clashed over the domination of a community at the hall and unleashed violence across the coastal belt. People were stabbed, homes were vandalised, gas shells were fired, and many were arrested. We do not want any of this to repeat, says Samson, fisher and secretary of Teeradesha Avakasha Samrakshana Samiti. Antony, another fisher, adds that the Jonakapuram-Moothakara stretch is a highly sensitive area and chances are high for a communal riot to erupt. Marshell, a crew member of Jesus, said they were not initially prepared to bring the catch to Jonakapuram. "Since we know what happened three years ago, we were not ready to create an issue. Our craft usually goes to Kollam port and today the department instructed us to go to Jonakapuram, which came as quite a surprise. We first thought of throwing the catch back to the sea to avoid any untoward incident, but later brought it to shore under police security, he says. At the same time, according to K. Suhair, Deputy Director, Fisheries, most of the fishers are cooperative. 'The the situation is under control currently and it will improve more in the coming days.

Kerala: Kumbalam project draws opposition

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kumbalam-project-draws-opposition/article31799497.ece

"The construction of a livelihood support centre at Kumbalam panchayat in the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) area has invited opposition from a section of the local residents. A few residents have approached the Ernakulam district administration and the Kerala Coastal Zone Management Authority (KCZMA) alleging that the project was coming up in violation of the various provisions of law. They said the facility was being built in violation of the CRZ norms and by encroaching upon the Kumbalam Canal. The project was being implemented on the northern side of the Kumbalam lake by reclaiming around 50 cent of the backwater. They also complained that waste was being dumped into the canal. KCZMA sources indicated that they had recently received a complaint, alleging violation of the CRZ norms in the construction of the project. The Rs.1.33-crore project is being implemented by the Kerala State Coastal

Development Corporation for the Kumbalam panchayat under the Basic Infrastructure Facilities and Human Development of the fisher folk programme of the Fisheries Department. Construction will be spread over an area of 2500 sq ft besides the shed and other structures of the project.

The project also includes a fish market and other allied facilities. The project, according to official records, was to provide diversified employment activities to strengthen the livelihood activities of the coastal inhabitants and to improve the fisheries infrastructure. However, the panchayat authorities denied the allegations. The Coastal Zone Management Authority had issued CRZ clearance to the project in March 2016, said Darly Antony, secretary of the panchayat. All statutory clearances were obtained for the project, he said. In its permission letter, the Authority had directed the project proponents not to alter the purpose of construction under any circumstances. The project was issued clearance under the CRZ 2011 notification. The project site was marked as CRZ 3 area in the project documents, according to the documents in the possession of the panchayat authorities.

Kerala: Mobile fish vending kiosk in Kochi gets a design patent! Check details

https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/science/mobile-fish-vending-kiosk-in-kochi-gets-a-design-patent-check-details/1984688/

"Mobile fish vending kiosk in Kochi gets a patent! Fish is an important part of the diet in Kerala and fish vendors often put up stalls on the road side, much like vegetable vendors in northern India. However, the hygiene and the freshness of fish sold this way has often been a cause of concern among authorities as well as consumers. So, the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), a branch of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research headquartered in Kochi, decided to design a mobile vending kiosk for fish, which would keep the fish fresh and hygienic. The mobile refrigerated fish vending kiosk, which was unveiled in 2017, has now received the certificate of registration by the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks for its design, as per several reports. The certificate will be valid for a period of five years. The kiosk has been designed by the Engineering division of the CIFT, under the supervision of head of department Manoj P Samuel.

According to the CIFT website, the refrigeration-enabled kiosk will improve the handling and marketing of the fish by small vendors, fisher folk and retailers. Since the kiosk is mobile, small vendors can also use it to sell fish on the roadside, without compromising with the hygiene. Features of fish vending kiosk - The kiosk has a chilled storage and display facility, with a hand-operated descaling machine. - It has also been fitted with a fish dressing deck, complete with a wash basin, water collection chamber, working space and a water tank. This makes the kiosk equipped with descaling, cutting, cleaning as well as packing facility. - Through the glass cover fitted on the kiosk, the consumers will continue to have the

opportunity to choose the fish they want. - As per CIFT, if conditions remain ideal, then the shelf life of the fish can be extended to four to five days, benefiting the vendors. Cost of mobile fish vending kiosk According to the CIFT website, the fabrication cost of the kiosk is around Rs 80,000, including the GST, making it affordable for small-scale vendors.

Kerala: Influx of TN fishermen amid lockdown, trawling ban puts officials on toes

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/jun/10/influx-of-tn-fishermen-amid-lockdown-trawling-ban-puts-officials-on-toes-2154506.html

"With trawling ban coming into force by Tuesday midnight, the influx of fishermen from neighbouring coastal districts in Tamil Nadu to Vizhinjam harbour amid Covid-19 vigil is a cause of concern for local fishermen and the authorities. They come by sea and road to Vizhinjam which offers the calmest landing centre in the region for safe fishing during monsoon season. “We have not seen any reduction in the number of fishermen from Tamil Nadu despite the restrictions in inter-state travel, said Kerala Swatantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation general secretary Jackson Pollayil. “There is concern among fishermen here as there is no effective mechanism to monitor fishermen from outside. Social distancing norms will go for a toss if the crowd could not be managed. Apart from a calm harbour supported by the breakwater, the absence of trawlers and spawning season make it attractive for fishermen to come in large numbers for a better catch. Fishermen from Thengapattanam, Kulachal and the border villages of Pulluvila visit Vizhinjam during this time every year. The district does not have trawlers and the 52-day trawling ban period is considered a season for a good catch in Vizhinjam. “The catch is likely to be better this time. The prolonged lockdown, followed by a trawling ban, ensured that the marine wealth was not overexploited, said Jackson. The Fisheries Department has started a control room and other enforcement activities in connection with the trawling ban. It includes three boats of marine enforcement and onshore presence of coastal police. But the officers acknowledge that it would be tough to prevent the fishermen from outside. “It is difficult to identify people coming from neighbouring district, said an officer of Fisheries Department.

Kerala: Food authority drive against lacing of fish with chemicals

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/food-authority-drive-against-lacing-of-fish-with-chemicals/article31782767.ece

"The Food Safety and Standards Authority is set to step up operations against the use of harmful chemicals to preserve fish. The monsoon trawling ban comes into effect on Wednesday

midnight and the ban period is associated with comparatively less supply of fish in the market, prompting unscrupulous elements to resort to the use of harmful chemicals as fish prices have shot up in the wake of the lockdown. A senior official of the Food Safety Authority said on Monday that nine tonnes of fish, found to contain harmful chemicals or stale, were seized and destroyed during the last two months in Ernakulam district. Operations by the authority officials had continued at different places in the district in the wake of complaints. Major markets and fishing harbours were under observation. In case of particular complaints even small outlets would be targets of inspection, said the official. The clarification came amidst allegations from local fishermen that the government was turning a blind eye to the practice of selling adulterated fish in the open market. There is considerable concern among the fishermen's community that fish from other States would be used to fill the demand-supply gap as the trawling ban comes into effect for two months. The National Fish Workers' Forum leader, T. Peter, alleged that there was some laxity on the part of the authorities in keeping a vigil over the retail fish market. The charges have been denied by the authorities who said they were aware of the situation and vigilant against malpractices. Prices down Meanwhile, the price of fish has cooled considerably over the past fortnight after the lockdown restrictions were eased on fishing activities. The price of oil sardines came down to about Rs.170 a kg on Monday from Rs.280 a week ago, said M.S. Jayan, a fish worker in Champakkara. Matsyafed sources said that its outlets were not procuring sardines as no local supplies were available. Indian mackerels sold for Rs.360 a kg on Monday while tunny varieties were selling for between Rs.260 and Rs.300 a kg in the retail market in Ernakulam. Shrimp varieties sold for Rs.430 to Rs.500 while trevally sold for Rs.440 a kg. Local favourites such as pearspot was dearer and sold for Rs.450 to Rs.500 a kg. Smaller seer fish weighing about 1 kg sold for Rs.480.

Kerala: Plan to relocate fishers to safer places yet to be a reality

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/plan-to-relocate-fishers-to-safer-places-yet-to-be-a-reality/article31783643.ece

"The plan to shift around 2,600 fishermen families living along vulnerable coastal areas in Kozhikode district to safer locations has not turned a reality, with the authorities yet to identify a suitable spot for the rehabilitation project. Objections raised by fishermen families to some of the proposals have also affected the realisation of the project. According to sources in the Fisheries Department, only around 550 families have expressed willingness to accept the relief package and relocate from their existing locations. Most beneficiaries say that they deserve a better rehabilitation package with better monetary benefits. Representatives of various fishermen's organisations claim that the State government's rehabilitation package gives only Rs. 10 lakh to a family to buy around three cents of land and build a house less than 600-sq. feet. However, many beneficiaries say it is not sufficient to meet the actual requirement,

considering the high value of land, its distance from the harbours, increasing cost of construction and the difficulty in accommodating larger families in small houses. A field study conducted by the Fisheries Department found that all the families identified for the proposed housing assistance scheme lived within 50 metres of the coastline, which is highly prone to sea erosion. According to the study, their relocation continues to be an important issue, considering the safety aspects and the increasing incidents of sea erosion every year. At the same time, Fisheries Department officials say they are not in a position to compel beneficiaries to accept the package and shift to newer locations. According to them, they can only submit the list of interested beneficiaries to the government and implement the project in a time-bound manner. The department is also on the lookout for cheaper land, especially the poramboke land under the possession of the Revenue Department. Meanwhile, fishermen's association leaders say no one will cooperate with the implementation of the scheme if the government is not ready to revise the existing package. The new houses offered to them should be close to the coastal areas to support their vocation, they add.

Kerala: 52-day trawling ban from midnight

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/52-day-trawling-ban-from-midnight/article31783687.ece

"With the monsoon season trawling ban set to begin on Tuesday midnight, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has urged fishers and trade unions/organisations in the sector to cooperate with the 52-day, annual fishing holiday. All boats that are out at sea should return before midnight. Fishing vessels from other States should leave Kerala shores before the ban becomes effective, the Minister said on Monday. Increase The ban, designed to coincide with the fish-breeding season, would help to replenish marine fishery resources, the Minister said. Marine fish production in Kerala, she added, had risen to 6.09 lakh metric tonnes in 2018-19 from 4.88 lakh metric tonnes in 2016-17. The Fisheries Department had hired 20 privately-owned vessels for carrying out patrols and rescue operations during the 52-day period. If needed, more boats would be hired, she said. Fuel bunks in fisheries harbours and landing centres would be remain shut for the duration of the ban, the Minister added. Marine ambulance The proposed marine ambulance would begin services this month, Ms. Mercykutty Amma said. She also urged fishers to reduce the use of the larger traditional fishing craft during the ban. She also urged traditional fishermen to strictly follow the instructions issued by district administrations from time to time when venturing out to sea. Weather-related inputs should be closely monitored before setting out, she added.

Kerala: Trawl ban based on ground reality, say fishers' union

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/trawl-ban-based-on-ground-reality-say-

fishers-union/article31773819.ece

"The Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi has demanded that the State government take up active measures to conserve fisheries resources even as the 52-day monsoon trawl ban is slated to come into effect later this week. Charles George, convener of the fishers' forum, said countries like Indonesia, Australia, and New Zealand had banned the practice of trawling. In Sri Lanka, it had been banned since 2018, he said. He slammed the Union government's decision to restrict trawl ban to just 47 days. Mr. George claimed that trawl ban had the backing of ground realities and knowledge of traditional fish workers on resource availability. Since 1988 The practice of imposing a ban on trawling during the rainy season came into effect in 1988 and since then there had been considerable efforts to ensure that marine fish resources were looked after and not overexploited to the detriment of the fishing community, he added. Traditional fish workers had always demanded that trawling ban should be imposed on all three months of rainy season but the government had decided against it. Optimal mesh size While ban on trawling was a big step towards conservation of resources, the government must also stop juvenile fishing totally. The union said the government should keep a strict vigil on net-making units to ensure that the mesh sizes complied with the regulations to end juvenile fishing.

Kerala: No lockdown blues for Tilapia seed import

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/no-lockdown-blues-for-tilapia-seed-import/article31762406.ece

"Last week, a chartered freighter Boeing 737-700 from Kolkata arrived at the Cochin International Airport (CIAL) with some unusual passengers 35 lakh Tilapia fish seeds. “Almost 2,000 farmers across Kerala were waiting desperately for Tilapia seeds to arrive, says Anandhu Ramesh, seed supplier, breeder, and farmer based in Kochi. Anandhu runs Cochin Aquatics at Perumbavoor, which deals with fish breeding and farming. He supplies fish seeds frys and fingerlings to farmers in the State. He sources them from Kolkata because of a demand that cannot be met by the regulatory allotment system of the government. Once they arrived, the seeds were released in prepared fish pens. “The fingerlings will grow table size in six months, just in time for Christmas, says Anandhu, adding, “Our entire Tilapia stock had been consumed during Easter. That is why even during the lockdown we decided to charter a flight and bring fish seeds. The next tranche, approximately the same quantity, is expected to arrive later this week. Also called aquatic chicken or broiler fish, Tilapia is the second most farmed fish in the world with a growing global market of 11% to 12% per annum, but its commercial farming in India is largely unorganised. In 2009, the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for Aquaculture (RGCA), the research and development arm of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), in technical collaboration with the World Fish Centre (WFC), Malaysia, established a nucleus breeding centre for genetically improved farmed

Tilapia (GIFT) at Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh.

In 2018, MPEDA set up the Multispecies Aquaculture Complex (MAC) at Vallarpadam to supply seeds to licensed farmers in Kerala. “So far, we have supplied seeds to 2,569 beneficiaries. The present estimated annual GIFT seed requirement in Kerala is around 10 to 12 million, says S. Sreekumar, Secretary, MPEDA. According to him, the gap between demand and supply can lead to a parallel chain of seed supply and farming. The Tilapia varieties used most commonly and that are commercially viable are the hormone treated mono sex Tilapia (MST) and GIFT. “They are predominantly male and hence grow fast and big. There are two methods of farming, one in the natural waterbody like rural ponds where the fish is fed with planktons and food waste. The cost of this farming is less than aquaculture ventures that require setting up of tanks, water purification system, and electricity. In the former, the farmer makes a good profit, while in the latter, which is high density, hand-fed with expensive feed, the margins are not so attractive, says Anandhu. Over the past four years, Kerala has been witnessing a growing community of Tilapia farmers, who are turning to aquaculture for scientific production. Dr. Shinoj Subramannian, head of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, CMFRI, says, “The Tilapia that was found naturally in our waterbodies 10 to 15 years ago were not so tasty, whereas GIFT is comparable in look and taste to the Pearl Spot, a popular Kerala fish. At ?250 a kg, it is pocket-friendly and affords good profit for the farmer. Dr. Shinoj organised a Tilapia festival last November in a bid to popularise the fish.

Anandhu supplied three crore Tilapia seeds in Kerala last year, which has 10 to 15 licensed hatcheries, pointing to a parallel seed supply chain that coexists along with licensed suppliers. Dr. K.K. Vijayan, Director, Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) cautions: “The seed business is a very big market. The movement of seeds should be monitored. The Kolkata seeds, apparently sourced from Bangladesh, are sold through agents based in Kolkata. Some seeds, also sourced by agents based in Kolkata, believed to be brought to Kerala, come through porous borders, from Thailand and Myanmar. There should be a stringent mechanism to check seed quality when it is brought to Kerala, especially when instances of emerging diseases and mortality caused by lethal viruses such as Tilapia lake VirUS (TiLV). A government-aided facility for random screening and testing of seeds, using DNA-based diagnostics at an affordable cost of ?500 is the need of the hour.So many farmers who have jumped into Tilapia farming after watching Youtube videos of a bountiful harvest and handsome profits have met with disaster. If there is subsidy for GIFT, there should be Standard Operating Procedures too in place. To meet the rising demand and check spurious seeds, MPEDA-RGCA has decided to increase supply to 7 million in the current year. The construction of a GIFT breeding facility at MAC, Vallarpadam, is under way and plans to establish similar facilities at and Pannivelchira are in the pipeline. “When these three facilities become functional, it can meet the entire Tilapia seed requirement in the State, says Sreekumar.

Kerala: Migrant workers protest in Kollam demanding train to go home

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/migrant-workers-protest-in-kollam-demanding-train-to-go-home-1.4798542

"A group of migrant labourers staged a protest in Kollam demanding train to return to their native places. The protest was conducted by the labourers who are working in fishing boats in Chettikulangara and Neendakara areas. Following this, the police drove them away from the place. The labourers are jobless after the lockdown was imposed. As trawling ban will start from June 9, they are unlikely to get any jobs. With this, they gathered at Thoppilkadavu area demanding facility to return home. Though the police asked them many times to return to their shelter camps, the workers did not budge. Thus the police had to drive them away by lathi charge. Earlier, a train had left to West Bengal. However, rest of the labourers did not get any train. First, the workers gathered in front of the collectorate, but returned on seeing police at the place. Later, they gathered at Thoppilkadavu area and protested.

Kerala: CIFT gets recognition for its refrigerated mobile fish vending kiosk

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/cift-gets-recognition-for-its-refrigerated-mobile-fish-vending-kiosk/article31736421.ece

"Kochi-based Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) has received the certificate of registration for its refrigerated mobile fish vending kiosk. The certificate of registration of the design has been awarded by the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks as recognition and accreditation to the innovative measures adopted for the upgradation of the post-harvest fisheries sector by CIFT by ensuring hygiene and freshness in retail fish selling. The Refrigerated Mobile Fish Vending Kiosk has been developed for the purpose of selling fish at the consumers' doorsteps, while keeping its freshness intact by maintaining it inside a closed refrigerated chamber with a temperature level of zero to four degree Celsius under hygienic conditions. The main components of the kiosk are fish storage and display chamber, hand-operated de-scaling machine, fish dressing deck with inbuilt wash basin, water tank, cutting tool, waste collection chamber and working space. The de-scaling machine attached to the kiosk helps remove the scales while cleaning the fish, and extend the edible quality of fish for four to five days, thus increasing the marginal benefit for fish vendors. The cost of a standard kiosk which can display 30 kg of fish and separately store 100 kg of fish in an ice-box is Rs.2,000 plus taxes.

The vending kiosks are manufactured and distributed through CIFT-approved empanelled agencies. So far, seven kiosks have been commercialised to various fish vendors in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Besides, under a scheme of Kerala State Fisheries Department, 20 kiosks have

been fabricated for the benefit of fisherwomen self-help groups (SHGs) under the aegis of the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF).

Kerala: Coronavirus lockdown adds to woes of Kerala fishermen

https://www.newkerala.com/news/2020/96819.html

"Fishermen in Kerala are facing difficulty in earning a livelihood as the state government has banned fishing due to the spread of coronavirus and subsequent lockdown. ""We had no work amid lockdown. We request the government to reduce the time period of the ban as we are running into losses,"" said Biju, a fisherman in Kochi while speaking to ANI. Apart from coronavirus lockdown, fishermen are facing trouble due to upcoming monsoon.

Kerala: IMD issues heavy rainfall warning for 9 districts

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/kerala-imd-issues-heavy-rainfall-warning-for-9-districts-11590988706949.html

"The Met department has issued heavy rainfall warning for nine districts of Kerala and also asked those staying near costal areas to take precautions. The wether department had earlier said monsoons are likely to hit Kerala on June 1. The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD)'s yellow alert for heavy rainfall is for the nine districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Idukki, Malappuram, and Kannur districts. ""Heavy rainfall is predicted and isolated areas are expected to receive 64.5 mm to 115.5 mm rain in 24 hours. The yellow alert is meant to warn the public and concerned officials to the situation,"" said the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA). KSDMA also issued a warning to those who live in areas prone to floods, landslides, and riverbanks, saying that they should take special precautions in case of strong winds and rain. Those living in coastal areas should also take adequate precautions, it said. IMD has issued Yellow alert for Ernakulam, Thrissur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kasaragod on June 2. IMD has placed Kannur and Kasaragod under yellow alert on June 3. IMD director general Dr Mrutyunjay Mohpatra has warned that a low-pressure area, which is building on the western coast in the Arabian Sea, will develop into a 'cyclonic storm' and will move towards Maharashtra and Gujarat, causing rainfall in these States on June 3 and 4. Fishermen have also been advised to not venture into the Arabian sea for the next couple of days.

Kerala: Fishing in Kerala coast, southeast Arabian Sea completely banned: CM Vijayan

https://www.thedispatch.in/fishing-in-kerala-coast-southeast-arabian-sea-completely-

banned-cm-vijayan/

"Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said that fishing in Kerala coast and southeast Arabian Sea has been completely banned from Thursday midnight as the state is expected to receive rainfall early next month. “India Meteorological Department (IMD) has informed that southwest monsoon will arrive in Kerala coast by the first week of June. The state will receive rainfall in the next five days. Fishing in Kerala coast and the southeast Arabian sea to be completely banned from midnight, Vijayan said. On Thursday, the IMD announced that conditions are favourable in Kerala for the onset of the southwest monsoon on June 1. “A low-pressure area is likely to form over the southeast and adjoining east-central Arabian Sea from May 31 to June 4, 2020. In view of this, conditions are very likely to become favourable from June 1, 2020 for the onset of southwest monsoon over Kerala, the IMD said in its bulletin. It also stated that the southwest monsoon has further advanced into some parts of Maldives-Comorin area, some more parts of south Bay of Bengal, remaining parts of Andaman Sea and Andaman and the Nicobar Islands.

Kerala: Control room to check illegal fishing during trawling ban

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/control-room-to-check-illegal-fishing-during-trawling-ban/article31699151.ece

"As part of the preparatory measures in place to prevent illegal fishing during the trawling ban period, the Fisheries Department has opened a round-the-clock control room at its fisheries station at Beypore (Phone: 0495-2414074). Besides, maritime patrol will begin on June 10. To coordinate rescue operations during the trawling ban period from June 9, as many as 13 guards will be deployed to cover vulnerable coastal areas. They will be selected on the basis of their experience in rescue operations and training. According to officials, the selection procedure will be the same as in previous years. Fishing boats from other States will have to leave the Kerala coast by May 31. There are around 600 such boats as per figures available with the Fisheries Department. The marine enforcement squad of the department will keep an eye on all suspicious fishing activities. Surveillance In Kozhikode district, there are 1,222 mechanised fishing boats and 4,601 boats fitted with outboard engines. There are also 200 country boats with Fisheries Department registration. Though country boats can venture into the sea, illegal practices such as pair trawling and fishing using banned materials will be viewed seriously during the ban period. Harbours and fish landing centres will be brought under the close surveillance of marine enforcement squads and the Coastal Police. In view of the trawling ban, various fishermen's organisations have called upon the State government to speed up processing of possible relief aids. They claimed that free ration and financial aid through various welfare schemes reached the needy weeks after the enforcement of the trawling ban. A leader of a prominent fishermen's association said the recent regulations introduced in

the name of the COVID-19 protocol at harbours and fish landing centres had caused huge revenue loss and trouble for native fishers. Many of them will become temporarily jobless once the trawling ban is in force. Therefore, they should be extended better assistance to surmount the crisis, he added.

Kerala: State ups preparedness for the rains

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/state-ups-preparedness-for-the-rains/article31700073.ece

"Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Thursday said the State should brace itself for heavy rain. Low pressure over the Arabian sea portends rough seas and heavy rain over Kerala till June 1. The government has banned maritime fishing. It has deemed setting off to sea or backwaters for fishing an illegal act until further notice. Boats engaged in deep-sea fishery have been asked to make for the nearest port at the earliest. Coastal police stations are on alert. The police are patrolling fish-landing centres and harbours and broadcasting weather warnings. The government seems wary of a replay of the 2017 Ockhi cyclone which had caught weather persons and the fishers off guard. The southwest monsoon is expected to make landfall in the first week of June. The weather department has predicted that the monsoon is likely to be vigorous over Kerala. Onus on people He said people should clean their homes and neighbourhoods to prevent the spread of vectors and water-borne diseases characteristic of the season. Hospitals should mandatorily test persons with flu and cold symptoms for COVID-19. Kerala has readied its disaster response mechanism. Emergency services and volunteer rescue teams are on the standby. Kerala would draw on its reserve of 3,37,00 ‘Sannadham' volunteers. They have proffered their services to the State to fight the pandemic. Nearly two lakh of them would be trained in rescue and relief work to assist the police, Fire and Rescue Services and local body officials in the event of a calamity.

Kerala: Invasive mussel is spreading rapidly in Kerala’s backwaters

https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/invasive-mussel-is-spreading-rapidly-in-keralas-backwaters/article31691226.ece

"An invasive mussel native to the South and Central American coasts is spreading quickly in the backwaters of Kerala, elbowing out other mussel and clam species and threatening the livelihoods of fishermen engaged in molluscan fisheries. The rapid spread of the Charru mussel (Mytella strigata) may have been triggered by Cyclone Ockhi which struck the region in 2017, according to a paper published in the Journal of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries . Worst-hit Surveys show the presence of the Charru mussel in the Kadinamkulam, Paravur, Edava-Nadayara, Ashtamudi, Kayamkulam, Vembanad, Chettuva and Ponnani estuaries/backwaters. Ashtamudi Lake, a Ramsar site in Kollam district, remains the worst-hit.

With a population as high as 11,384 per sq metre here, it has replaced the Asian green mussel (Perna viridis) and the edible oyster Magallana bilineata (known locally as muringa). Externally, the Charru mussel resembles the green and brown mussels (kallummekka in Malayalam), but is much smaller in size. Its colour varies from black to brown, purple or dark green. In many areas, this invasive species has smothered beds of the short-neck clam (manja kakka), according to the paper authored by A. Biju Kumar and Ravinesh R. of the Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala, Graham Oliver of the National Museum of Wales, S. K. Tan of the National University of Singapore, and Kalesh Sadasivan of the Travancore Natural History Society. In Ashtamudi Lake, the Charru mussel had established breeding populations in 2018 and 2019, acquiring the moniker ‘varathan kakka' (alien mollusc). The short-necked clam fisheries in the lake had obtained an eco label from the Marine Stewardship Council and about 3,000 people are dependent on fisheries here.

In such a scenario, the fast-breeding Charru mussel could be seen as a ‘pest,' the authors state. “The potential of Mytella strigata to outcompete the lucrative clam fishery is a serious concern that urgently needs to be addressed, they add. Though this smaller mussel is edible, the overall economic loss and impact on biodiversity is much bigger, it is pointed out. In all probability, the mussel reached the Indian shores attached to ship hulls or as larval forms in ballast water discharges. Cyclone Ockhi may have simply sped up their invasion of inland waters. In this scenario, there is an urgent need to identify the presence of the Charru mussel in other parts of India by locating the pathways of introduction, said Biju Kumar of the University of Kerala. Invasion biology There is also a need to promote studies on invasion biology and strengthen awareness on marine invasive species, he said.

Kerala: Fresh fish in short supply in lockdown

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fresh-fish-in-short-supply-in-lockdown/articleshow/76047335.cms

"Availability of fresh fish in the city during the lockdown has gone down by more than 85%, according to a study. Only 20 metric tonnes (MT) of fish were sold daily during the lockdown as against an average of 150MT on pre-lockdown days, revealed the rough estimate. The shortage was not because of the lack of production, but of hassles in distribution and reaching out to buyers. The reports of contaminated fish also played a role in keeping the customers away. “Around 550 brackish fish farmers couldn't sell their fish because there were no auctions. There was around 400MT of fish waiting to be harvested in the farms around Kochi, said Shinoj Subramaniam, project-head, Krishi Vigyan Kendra of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (KVK-CMFRI). He said a self-help group, functioning under KVK, was roped in to reach out to homes. “It was easier to go to apartments and we managed to help some of the farmers, he added. KVK has also been associated with multi-level farming

initiatives that have been mushrooming in the district during the lockdown. He said the farm service centre at CMFRI has been receiving huge response seeking support for farm-related activities.

The centre, which was launched last year, offers a host of services to the farmers. They rent out machineries such as tractors, power tiller, power weeder, different types of ploughs, rotavators, earth augers, motorized and hand operated sprayers, paddy transplanter, agro waste shredder, slurry pump and water pump to farmers on payment basis. Tractor-operated bund former, a tool used to prepare terraces for cultivation of tapioca and ginger, is the most sought-after at the centre by the farmers during this season, said Shinoj. Machineries used in vegetable cultivation and banana farming are also receiving good response from the farmers. Brush cutters are also sought after by budding farmers. The centre also offers agricultural expert advice to the farmers, he said. “The farm service centre was launched with an aim to offer services in agriculture to the public under one roof. Presently, trained staff of the KVK offer technical services such as land preparation, pond preparation, fish cage fabrication and ploughing, he added.

Kerala: State’s decision on fishing ban sparks row

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/states-decision-on-fishing-ban-sparks-row/article31680391.ece

"While the Centre has issued an order limiting the uniform fishing ban to 47 days, the State's decision to stick to the earlier schedule has sparked another row in the sector. The new order imposes the ban on all west coast States in fishing in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from June 15 to July 31, bringing down the number of days from 52 to 47 in Kerala. “But since the State can decide when to implement the ban on the territorial waters extending up to 12 nautical miles, there will be no change in Kerala. The annual monsoon ban in the State will begin on June 9 midnight and no trawler will be permitted to cross the territorial waters, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma told The Hindu. The decision comes as a major blow to the mechanised sector, which was expecting an early lifting of the ban. Since the fishers in the sector had lost several working days during the pandemic leaving the industry in a standstill, they had suggested it as a remedial measure to revive the economy. “While States such as Tamil Nadu has accepted the order, the State government's stand comes as a huge disappointment for us. As per the new order, the ban period ends in Tamil Nadu on June 1, much ahead of the original schedule and our sea will be teeming with boats from other places. We are planning to approach the Chief Minister so that the government will reconsider the decision, said Joseph Xavier Kalappurakkal, general secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association. He said the measures introduced to augment and regenerate marine resources were just an eyewash with no scientific or logical base. “It's a period when Kerala's

large traditional fleet exploit the resources. They follow all unscientific methods and the nets they use weigh around 4,000 kg.

There are traditional boats much bigger than boats in the mechanised sector and there is no point in preventing only trawlers in the name of conservation, he said. Meanwhile, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) had already submitted a memorandum to the Centre demanding that the order be scrapped, reverting the fishing ban period to its standard 61-day period. Pointing out that the monsoon was the season for fish spawning, they argued that it was essential to protect the marine habitat during this period. "Kerala has been a fore-runner in this field and this uniform fishing ban came into effect after several years of inter-sector and inter-State conflicts. Another reason for opting this season is the turbulent monsoon climate and concerns over sea safety. Moreover, it is a time when migrant labourers return to their native places and some States are still reeling under the impact of Amphan. Reducing the days of trawl ban will only protect the interests of the hugely exploitative mechanised sector, said T. Peter, general secretary, NFF.

Kerala: Small-scale fishers thrive under new pricing system

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/small-scale-fishers-thrive-under-new-pricing-system/articleshow/75925515.cms

"Harbour management societies floated to regulate buying and selling of fishes by adhering to social distancing norms has ensured fair price for traditional fishers who were at the mercy of middlemen known as 'Tharakans' and retailers who hold the sway when it comes to fixing the value of day's catch. Though these management societies comprised of representatives of all stakeholders including boat owners, middlemen, retailers, and fishers are considered temporary, the lessons learned from it would be useful in the future to enact laws governing fish auctions, officials said. "Traditional fishers with small boats are now getting a base price fixed by the management society. Earlier, if the catch was abundant this was quite difficult and the prices would drop, says P V Jayan, Ernakulam district secretary of Paramparagatha Matsya Thozhilali Samithi. While the system is working well, the Tharakans and retailers are not quite happy with it because it has tinkered with their ability to maximize the profit. "The earlier system was better. Retailers and boat owners are asking when this would come to end. Not all fish retailers cannot enter the harbour because of the restrictions, said Girish Kumar, who works as an agent. It is the Tharakans who finance the boats and this credit dependence fishers have on them gives middlemen a huge advantage. The Samithi is aware of the limitations of the system in the absence of a cold chain infrastructure. "The fisheries minister has promised that they would enact a law that ensures fishers are not exploited but cold storage facilities are crucial. Matysafed would be buying from the fishers if the middlemen and retailers quote below the base price but if this is to be realised they need to build storage

infra, said Jayan. A study paper titled 'Empowerment of Kerala's fishermen: Need for change in the role of Matsyafed' by Sara John and Nimmish Sany had found that lack of storage facilities is one of the major reasons for wide fluctuation of the price of fish. “For the small boats, it is a good deal. But we are not sure how long this would continue. The department has asked for a report from the CMFRI and this needs to be discussed in various levels by all stakeholders. Currently, the credit is provided by middlemen. There is the question of who will substitute this credit, said Maja Jose, deputy director, fisheries, Ernakulam.

Kerala: Monsoon trawling ban from June 9 midnight: Mechanised boat owners seek exemption this year

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/kerala-monsoon-trawling-ban-mechanised-boat-owners-seek-exemption-this-year/article31641764.ece

"The Kerala Government's decision to impose the annual monsoon trawling ban from June 9 has raked up a controversy among the fishing community, with mechanised boat owners opposing the move in view of the fishing holidays during the lockdown period. Seeking a one-time exemption for trawling this year, they said thousands of boats in the mechanised sector have been lying idle after the lockdown was imposed on March 25 and these vessels could not fully resume operations even after the government come out with the relaxation. However, the State Fisheries Department is going ahead with the ban with effect from June 9 midnight, asking fishing boats operating from other States to leave the region. The 52-day ban was planned considering the fish breeding season and helps to fill up the marine fishery resources. Exemption will help Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, told BusinessLine that the 50-day fishing ban due to Covid lockdown was a great impetus in the propagation of fish variety. The already filled coffers of the deep seas will further get filled if the trawling ban during June and July was imposed. Foreign fishing vessels with sophisticated technology, especially that of China, would target the fishery resources of Indian seawaters in the ban period, he said. Because of the lockdown, many segments in the fisheries sector are facing a huge crisis and an exemption this year would help revive the sector, he said, adding that the relaxation for deep sea fishing in the lockdown period has not yielded the desired results on account of the limited fishing hours for venturing into the seas. “When our economy is striving to recover, a further imposition of a fishing ban during June and July is suicidal. On an experimental basis, until a detailed study of the scientific community comes up as to the benefits of monsoon ban and its ill effect, the fishing ban may not be imposed this year, he said. Conservation measure However, the traditional fishermen community is not in favour of any relaxation to the mechansied sector, saying that many nations in the world have enforced seasonal ban as a conservation measure. Quoting studies, Charles George, president of Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi, pointed out that the imposition of such a ban dates back centuries and the closure period ranges from 45 days in the

US to nine months in New Zealand. But in most cases, the duration is two months, which seems to be necessary for the rejuvenation of fish stock, especially shrimp varieties. The seafood export sector is witnessing a huge shortage, especially varieties such as squid, octopus, cuttlefish, deep sea shrimp, etc, due to the Covid ban and the situation may further aggravate once the trawling ban comes into effect by next month, said a seafood exporter.

Kerala: Fishing boat operators to boycott meet called by min

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/may/19/fishing-boat-operators-to-boycott-meet-called-by-min-2145096.html

"After the state government decided to go ahead with the annual trawling ban starting next month, the boat operators who would face the restriction decided to boycott a meeting called by Fisheries Minister Mercykutty Amma to discuss the ban on May 20. The boat operators expected the government to relax the ban to compensate for the livelihood lost due to lockdown. Every year the minister conducts the meeting before announcing the trawling ban in the second week of June. This time the meeting was arranged online. “It is a mere formality to ensure our approval, said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal, general secretary of All-Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association (AKFBOA). “The fishing sector is a major employer and its function is to ensure the food security of the common man. He said over 3 lakh people are involved in the sector, both directly and indirectly. Besides, the sector offers job opportunities for those returning to Gulf countries, said Joseph Xavier.

The fishing sector managed to get `50 crore worth of landing daily during the same season last year. This resulted in the creation of one lakh working days. Also, the workers received `1,000 per day as wages, said Xavier. The fishing community is sharply divided over the effectiveness of trawling ban, introduced to protect marine life during spawning season since 1988. The traditional fishermen who gets exemption from the ban wanted a 90-day ban to ensure sustainable fishing while the boat operators see it as a bane that affects their livelihood. Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation has sought effective patrolling by the Marine Enforcement Wing to prevent boat operators from Kerala and Tamil Nadu from entering the sea during the ban period.

Karnataka: Govt bans entry of people from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu till May 31

https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/karnataka-govt-bans-entry-of-people-from-gujarat-maharashtra-kerala-tamil-nadu-till-may-31

"The Karnataka government on Monday banned entry of people from Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu till May 31. Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa while addressing media said, ""We have decided not to allow entry of people from Gujarat,

Maharashtra, Kerala and Tamil Nadu till May 31."" This came after Yediyurappa held a meeting with state ministers and senior government officers to discuss the guidelines issued by the Centre regarding the fourth phase of nationwide lockdown. "State road transport corporation buses in Karnataka and private buses will run. Strict lockdown measures in containment zones and economic activities will be permitted in other areas. Sundays will be total lockdown across the state. Home quarantine will be strengthened,"" he added. The Chief Minister further said that all shops will be allowed to open and all trains running within the state will be permitted. The central government on Sunday extended the ongoing COVID-19 induced nationwide lockdown till May 31, but with a set of new relaxations commencing from Monday. The Union Home Ministry has also given powers to States/UTs demarcate areas in Green, Orange and Red zones, which will allow them to start activities except in containment zones.

Karnataka: Udupi fishermen stranded in Kerala return home

http://www.uniindia.com/udupi-fishermen-stranded-in-kerala-return-home/south/news/2000232.html

"As many as 41 boats, along with fishermen from Udupi, who were stranded in Kerala due to Covid-19 lockdown, returned to Hangarakatte and Gangolli fisheries port on Sunday. The boats had remained stranded in Cheruvathur, Chombala and Kannur in Northern Kerala. Karnataka Minister for Fisheries Kota Srinivas Poojary had informed the Chief Secretary Vijayabhakar, who in turn contacted his counterpart in Kerala. The latter made arrangements for the return of the fishermen. Boat owners along with few fishermen left for Kerala in three mechanised fishing boats, to bring back the fishermen along with their fishing boats, the fishermen on returning to their villages thanked the Minister for the timely help rendered to them.

Kerala: Fishers fume over stimulus package

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-fume-over-stimulus-package/article31602900.ece

"The National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) has expressed deep disappointment over the economic stimulus package announced by the Central government for the fisheries sector. In a pressnote issued here, NFF said the package had let down fish workers, workers in allied sectors, migrant fishers and fish vendors who had been rendered jobless by the lockdown triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. It said the government, while announcing measures to promote prawn farming and fisheries exports, had offered nothing for the fisherfolk to stave off deprivation and starvation. The pressnote observed that the free ration announced by the Centre had also bypassed the fisherfolk since most of them were in the APL list. NFF national

general secretary T. Peter and State president Jackson Pollayil urged the government to sanction an assistance of Rs.10,000 each for fishermen families for the next three months in view of the suspension of fishing operations due to the pandemic and the impending trawling ban during the monsoon period.

Kerala: The coronavirus slayer! How Kerala's rock star health minister helped save it from Covid-19

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/the-coronavirus-slayer-how-keralas-rock-star-health-minister-helped-save-it-from-covid-19

"On 20 January, KK Shailaja phoned one of her medically trained deputies. She had read online about a dangerous new virus spreading in China. "Will it come to us? she asked. "Definitely, Madam, he replied. And so the health minister of the Indian state of Kerala began her preparations. Four months later, Kerala has reported only 524 cases of Covid-19, four deaths and – according to Shailaja – no community transmission. The state has a population of about 35 million and a GDP per capita of only £2,200. By contrast, the UK (double the population, GDP per capita of £33,100) has reported more than 40,000 deaths, while the US (10 times the population, GDP per capita of £51,000) has reported more than 82,000 deaths; both countries have rampant community transmission. As such, Shailaja Teacher, as the 63-year-old minister is affectionately known, has attracted some new nicknames in recent weeks – Coronavirus Slayer and Rockstar Health Minister among them. The names sit oddly with the merry, bespectacled former secondary school science teacher, but they reflect the widespread admiration she has drawn for demonstrating that effective disease containment is possible not only in a democracy, but in a poor one. How has this been achieved? Three days after reading about the new virus in China, and before Kerala had its first case of Covid-19, Shailaja held the first meeting of her rapid response team. The next day, 24 January, the team set up a control room and instructed the medical officers in Kerala's 14 districts to do the same at their level. By the time the first case arrived, on 27 January, via a plane from Wuhan, the state had already adopted the World Health Organization's protocol of test, trace, isolate and support. As the passengers filed off the Chinese flight, they had their temperatures checked. Three who were found to be running a fever were isolated in a nearby hospital. The remaining passengers were placed in home quarantine – sent there with information pamphlets about Covid-19 that had already been printed in the local language, Malayalam.

The hospitalised patients tested positive for Covid-19, but the disease had been contained. "The first part was a victory, says Shailaja. "But the virus continued to spread beyond China and soon it was everywhere. In late February, encountering one of Shailaja's surveillance teams at the airport, a Malayali family returning from Venice was evasive about its travel history and went home without submitting to the now-standard controls. By the time medical personnel

detected a case of Covid-19 and traced it back to them, their contacts were in the hundreds. Contact tracers tracked them all down, with the help of advertisements and social media, and they were placed in quarantine. Six developed Covid-19. Another cluster had been contained, but by now large numbers of overseas workers were heading home to Kerala from infected Gulf states, some of them carrying the virus. On 23 March, all flights into the state's four international airports were stopped. Two days later, India entered a nationwide lockdown. At the height of the virus in Kerala, 170,000 people were quarantined and placed under strict surveillance by visiting health workers, with those who lacked an inside bathroom housed in improvised isolation units at the state government's expense. That number has shrunk to 21,000.

“We have also been accommodating and feeding 150,000 migrant workers from neighbouring states who were trapped here by the lockdown, she says. “We fed them properly – three meals a day for six weeks. Those workers are now being sent home on charter trains. Shailaja was already a celebrity of sorts in India before Covid-19. Last year, a movie called Virus was released, inspired by her handling of an outbreak of an even deadlier viral disease, Nipah, in 2018. (She found the character who played her a little too worried-looking; in reality, she has said, she couldn't afford to show fear.) She was praised not only for her proactive response, but also for visiting the village at the centre of the outbreak. The villagers were terrified and ready to flee, because they did not understand how the disease was spreading. “I rushed there with my doctors, we organised a meeting in the panchayat [village council] office and I explained that there was no need to leave, because the virus could only spread through direct contact, she says. “If you kept at least a metre from a coughing person, it couldn't travel. When we explained that, they became calm – and stayed. Nipah prepared Shailaja for Covid-19, she says, because it taught her that a highly contagious disease for which there is no treatment or vaccine should be taken seriously. In a way, though, she had been preparing for both outbreaks all her life. This is true of other states, too, says MP Cariappa, a public health expert based in Pune, Maharashtra state, but nowhere else are people so invested in their primary health system. Kerala enjoys the highest life expectancy and the lowest infant mortality of any state in India; it is also the most literate state.

“With widespread access to education, there is a definite understanding of health being important to the wellbeing of people, says Cariappa. Shailaja says: “I heard about those struggles – the agricultural movement and the freedom fight – from my grandma. She was a very good storyteller. Although emergency measures such as the lockdown are the preserve of the national government, each Indian state sets its own health policy. If the Kerala model had not been in place, she insists, her government's response to Covid-19 would not have been possible. That said, the state's primary health centres had started to show signs of age. When Shailaja's party came to power in 2016, it undertook a modernisation programme. One pre-pandemic innovation was to create clinics and a registry for respiratory disease – a big problem

in India. “That meant we could spot conversion to Covid-19 and look out for community transmission, Shailaja says. “It helped us very much. When the outbreak started, each district was asked to dedicate two hospitals to Covid-19, while each medical college set aside 500 beds. Separate entrances and exits were designated. Diagnostic tests were in short supply, especially after the disease reached wealthier western countries, so they were reserved for patients with symptoms and their close contacts, as well as for random sampling of asymptomatic people and those in the most exposed groups: health workers, police and volunteers. Shailaja says a test in Kerala produces a result within 48 hours.

“In the Gulf, as in the US and UK – all technologically fit countries – they are having to wait seven days, she says. “What is happening there? She doesn't want to judge, she says, but she has been mystified by the large death tolls in those countries: “I think testing is very important – also quarantining and hospital surveillance – and people in those countries are not getting that. She knows, because Malayalis living in those countries have phoned her to say so. Places of worship were closed under the rules of lockdown, resulting in protests in some Indian states, but resistance has been noticeably absent in Kerala – in part, perhaps, because its chief minister, Pinarayi Vijayan, consulted with local faith leaders about the closures. Shailaja says Kerala's high literacy level is another factor: “People understand why they must stay at home. You can explain it to them. The Indian government plans to lift the lockdown on 17 May (the date has been extended twice). After that, she predicts, there will be a huge influx of Malayalis to Kerala from the heavily infected Gulf region. “It will be a great challenge, but we are preparing for it, she says. There are plans A, B and C, with plan C – the worst-case scenario – involving the requisitioning of hotels, hostels and conference centres to provide 165,000 beds. If they need more than 5,000 ventilators, they will struggle – although more are on order – but the real limiting factor will be manpower, especially when it comes to contact tracing. “We are training up schoolteachers, Shailaja says. Once the second wave has passed – if, indeed, there is a second wave – these teachers will return to schools. She hopes to do the same, eventually, because her ministerial term will finish with the state elections a year from now. Since she does not think the threat of Covid-19 will subside any time soon, what secret would she like to pass on to her successor? She laughs her infectious laugh, because the secret is no secret: “Proper planning. This article was amended on 14 May 2020 to correct the figure for the UK's GDP per capita. It was originally given as £40,400, but this is the figure in US dollars.

Kerala: Fishermen advised not to venture into sea after inclement weather warning

https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/kerala-fishermen-advised-not-to-venture-into-sea-after-inclement-weather-warning20200514190237/

"in Kerala were on Thursday advised not to venture into the sea at low pressure area over southeast Bay of Bengal after inclement weather forecast for today till May 18. ""Inclement

weather likely from today through May 18th. Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning and gusty winds likely at 1 or 2 places. Low pressure area over southeast Bay of Bengal. Sea conditions would be very rough. Fishermen advised not to venture into these areas,"" CMO tweeted.The India Meteorological Department has predicted generally cloudy sky with one or two spells of rain or thundershowers for the week with the maximum and minimum temperature hovering around 34 and 25 degrees Celcius respectively.

The coronavirus slayer! How Kerala's rock star health minister helped save it from Covid-19

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/14/the-coronavirus-slayer-how-keralas-rock-star-health-minister-helped-save-it-from-covid-19

"KK Shailaja has been hailed as the reason a state of 35 million people has only lost four to the virus. Here's how the former teacher did it. On 20 January, KK Shailaja phoned one of her medically trained deputies. She had read online about a dangerous new virus spreading in China. "Will it come to us? she asked. "Definitely, Madam, he replied. And so the health minister of the Indian state of Kerala began her preparations. Four months later, Kerala has reported only 524 cases of Covid-19, four deaths and – according to Shailaja – no community transmission. The state has a population of about 35 million and a GDP per capita of only £2,200. By contrast, the UK (double the population, GDP per capita of £33,100) has reported more than 40,000 deaths, while the US (10 times the population, GDP per capita of £51,000) has reported more than 82,000 deaths; both countries have rampant community transmission. As such, Shailaja Teacher, as the 63-year-old minister is affectionately known, has attracted some new nicknames in recent weeks – Coronavirus Slayer and Rockstar Health Minister among them.

The names sit oddly with the merry, bespectacled former secondary school science teacher, but they reflect the widespread admiration she has drawn for demonstrating that effective disease containment is possible not only in a democracy, but in a poor one. How has this been achieved? Three days after reading about the new virus in China, and before Kerala had its first case of Covid-19, Shailaja held the first meeting of her rapid response team. The next day, 24 January, the team set up a control room and instructed the medical officers in Kerala's 14 districts to do the same at their level. By the time the first case arrived, on 27 January, via a plane from Wuhan, the state had already adopted the World Health Organization's protocol of test, trace, isolate and support. As the passengers filed off the Chinese flight, they had their temperatures checked. Three who were found to be running a fever were isolated in a nearby hospital. The remaining passengers were placed in home quarantine – sent there with information pamphlets about Covid-19 that had already been printed in the local language, Malayalam. The hospitalised patients tested positive for Covid-19, but the disease had been

contained.

“The first part was a victory, says Shailaja. “But the virus continued to spread beyond China and soon it was everywhere. In late February, encountering one of Shailaja's surveillance teams at the airport, a Malayali family returning from Venice was evasive about its travel history and went home without submitting to the now-standard controls. By the time medical personnel detected a case of Covid-19 and traced it back to them, their contacts were in the hundreds. Contact tracers tracked them all down, with the help of advertisements and social media, and they were placed in quarantine. Six developed Covid-19. Another cluster had been contained, but by now large numbers of overseas workers were heading home to Kerala from infected Gulf states, some of them carrying the virus. On 23 March, all flights into the state's four international airports were stopped. Two days later, India entered a nationwide lockdown. At the height of the virus in Kerala, 170,000 people were quarantined and placed under strict surveillance by visiting health workers, with those who lacked an inside bathroom housed in improvised isolation units at the state government's expense. That number has shrunk to 21,000. “We have also been accommodating and feeding 150,000 migrant workers from neighbouring states who were trapped here by the lockdown, she says. “We fed them properly – three meals a day for six weeks.

Those workers are now being sent home on charter trains. Shailaja was already a celebrity of sorts in India before Covid-19. Last year, a movie called Virus was released, inspired by her handling of an outbreak of an even deadlier viral disease, Nipah, in 2018. (She found the character who played her a little too worried-looking; in reality, she has said, she couldn't afford to show fear.) She was praised not only for her proactive response, but also for visiting the village at the centre of the outbreak. The villagers were terrified and ready to flee, because they did not understand how the disease was spreading. “I rushed there with my doctors, we organised a meeting in the panchayat [village council] office and I explained that there was no need to leave, because the virus could only spread through direct contact, she says. “If you kept at least a metre from a coughing person, it couldn't travel.

When we explained that, they became calm – and stayed. Nipah prepared Shailaja for Covid-19, she says, because it taught her that a highly contagious disease for which there is no treatment or vaccine should be taken seriously. In a way, though, she had been preparing for both outbreaks all her life. The Communist Party of India (Marxist), of which she is a member, has been prominent in Kerala's governments since 1957, the year after her birth. (It was part of the Communist Party of India until 1964, when it broke away.) Born into a family of activists and freedom fighters – her grandmother campaigned against untouchability – she watched the so-called “Kerala model be assembled from the ground up; when we speak, this is what she wants to talk about. The foundations of the model are land reform – enacted via legislation that capped how much land a family could own and increased land ownership among tenant farmers

– a decentralised public health system and investment in public education.

Every village has a primary health centre and there are hospitals at each level of its administration, as well as 10 medical colleges. This is true of other states, too, says MP Cariappa, a public health expert based in Pune, Maharashtra state, but nowhere else are people so invested in their primary health system. Kerala enjoys the highest life expectancy and the lowest infant mortality of any state in India; it is also the most literate state. “With widespread access to education, there is a definite understanding of health being important to the wellbeing of people, says Cariappa. Shailaja says: “I heard about those struggles – the agricultural movement and the freedom fight – from my grandma. She was a very good storyteller. Although emergency measures such as the lockdown are the preserve of the national government, each Indian state sets its own health policy. If the Kerala model had not been in place, she insists, her government's response to Covid-19 would not have been possible.

Kerala: Fish workers’ forum seeks Centre’s help from Emergency Disaster Relief Fund

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/fish-workers-forum-seek-centres-help-from-emergency-disaster-relief-fund/article31580265.ece

"The Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi (Fish Workers Joint Forum) has sought the usage of the Central Government's Emergency Disaster Relief Fund to alleviate the problems faced by fishermen in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions associated with it. Charles George, president of the Forum, said the Kerala Government has requested the Centre to allow ?686 crore from the Emergency Disaster Relief Fund as an aid for the sector. The State has already come out with a relief package of ?2,000 per month for each fisherman, besides distributing free ration and food kits.

But this will not suffice to compensate for the losses faced by the community due to their inability to venture into the seas due to the restrictions. Quoting reports, he said the fishing industry has suffered a loss of around Rs. 3,500 crore till May 1 following the lockdown. Apart from this, the sector is facing a crisis due to a “drought of fish. The decrease in the production of sardines has proved costly for the fishermen, whose losses have risen to around Rs. 10,000 crore in the last five years. The fisheries co-ordination committee has already demanded a family pension of Rs. 5,000 per month to compensate for the losses due to the scarcity of fish. However, the State Government could not allocate the required sum in the budget due to financial constraints. The Covid situation has further aggravated the problem, bringing the

fisheries industry to a standstill. Besides fishermen, the restrictions have impacted the distribution, storage, preservation and export sectors as well, he added.

Kerala: It is time to start fish farming in city limits

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/may/12/it-is-time-to-start-fish-farming-in-city-limits-in-kerala-2142203.html

"As part of the state government's 'Subhiksha Keralam' project aimed at evolving a self-sustainable post-COVID lifestyle, the corporation is joining hands with the fisheries department. Under the joint venture, fish farming will be launched in various water bodies within the civic body's limits. Fisheries Minister J Mercykutty Amma visited Charachira pond in Nanthancode. "By expanding fish cultivation, we will be able to become self-sufficient in fish production while protecting ponds across the state. We will be able to create more job opportunities by identifying more ponds for the purpose, the minister said. The Charachira pond is full of weeds and the water remains contaminated. The weeds will have to be removed on a massive scale before the project can begin. Earlier, students of the school nearby had requested the corporation to protect the pond. "Including Charachira, we have identified 60 ponds in the city limits for fish cultivation. By mid-June, we will be able to start farming, said Mayor K Sreekumar

Kerala: Fishermen pay tribute to COVID 19 frontline workers

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/events/kochi/fishermen-pay-tribute-to-covid-19-frontline-workers/articleshow/75675942.cms

"The work performed by Covid 19 frontline workers, including the police and health workers, are appreciated by the government, as well as the public. Recently, paying tribute to them was the fishermen community from Thiruvananthapuram. The Independent Fishermen Association expressed their gratitude with a ceremony at which they released balloons on Veli beach. The leader of the association, T Peter, also spoke to the assembled group, including children and elders, to be aware of Coronavirus spread and follow the preventive guidelines announced by the government.

Kerala: New system fetches fishermen fair price

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/new-system-fetches-fishermen-fair-price/articleshow/75670709.cms

"Fishing harbours in Ernakulam have successfully introduced a system to fix rates of landings at the harbours during the lockdown period. It is more than 20 days now and with the small mechanized boats going to sea, the sales are just getting larger. As crowding is not

allowed, auctions cannot be conducted even though small boats are bringing in catches. As a first step, officials of Matsyafed and district fisheries department fixed the sale price after discussion with the fishermen. From May 1, when the mechanized boats started fishing, small harbour management committees have been formed and the prices fixed after consultation with the fishermen bringing in the catch. The committee has fishermen, fisheries and Matsyfed officials, local harbour management council. “The rates are fixed based on the average price of the variety in the week or the latest sale done across Kerala, Daisy Benny, district manager, Matsyafed, Thoppumpady. She said that this will continue till May 17. The district has the largest and the biggest fishing fleet of all sizes in the four harbours including, Thopumpady, Munambam, Kallamukku and Chellanam.

On Friday, Rs 4.39 lakh worth fish and prawns were sold at Cochin harbour through this rate fixing which is one of the highest in the lockdown period. Officials said fishermen are happy as it ensures a single price for the catch throughout the day. The boats bring their landings by 6am and the sale happens from 8am to 3pm in the direct monitoring of the officials. “However, they have been asking us to start at 6am which is a little difficult as our staff can't reach at that time in the absence of public transport facility. We are now arranging a taxi for pick-up, an official said. “This new system has been exciting and profitable as the fishermen is having a say in the price of their catch. There are small issues but the state government has initiated discussions with all stakeholders and experts to come up with a proper and fair pricing system of landings, said Charles George, general secretary of Kerala Matsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi.

Kerala: Large fisher groups seek cancellation or partial trawl ban

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/large-fisher-groups-seek-cancellation-or-partial-trawl-ban-in-kerala/articleshow/75597200.cms

"Large fisher groups have written to the Centre seeking cancellation or partial lifting of the trawl ban due for Kerala in June. They say that they have already missed more than three months of active fishing time and hence would prefer at least one month adjustment of the period which starts for Kerala from June 15 onwards for 52 days rather than the 60-days being followed in other states. “We have sent a representation to the Centre asking for a cancelling of the trawl ban or having it in just July. We would like to go fishing in May and June and the state can impose trawl ban in July as monsoon intensifies in that month, said Joseph Xavier Kalapurackel, president, all-Kerala fishing boat operators association. He said that they have not been operating since January since year because of the low catch. ‘This was followed by the lockdown period. Last year, May was a highly profitable season for us, he said. Meanwhile, the fishermen unions are already up against any discussions on such a move. “The ban is a scientific decision to ensure that the fish resource remains sustainable. It is good for the society and the marine environment, said Charles George, secretary, Kerala fishworkers union.

The Centre had issued an order on March 20 announcing a uniform ban on fishing for all fishing vessels in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) beyond territorial waters for conservation and effective management of fishery resources and also for sea safety reasons. The ban on east coast is from April 15- June 14 (both days inclusive) (61 days) and in west coast from June 1-July 31 (both days inclusive) (61 days). Kerala had a 52 day ban last year. The traditional non-motorized units shall be exempted from this uniform fishing ban imposed in the Indian EEZ beyond territorial waters. However, it is learnt that Tamil Nadu sought an advancement of the ban period from the lockdown day March 24 and end in 61 days. This has led to other states also seeking a cutting down of the days or doing away with the ban as the lockdown has already imposed a ban of fishing activities. According to official sources, all states raised this issue during a teleconference with the ministry. “We have written to the Centre and the states not to withdraw or change the trawling ban. This ban has been formulated to help regenerate marine fisheries in the Indian waters. At the very outset, this proposition from the East coast states is alarming. The lockdown has impacted the fishing sector uniformly and everyone along the value chain is in distress. The tampering with the ban order will only work in the favour of the mechanised sector which overwhelmingly accesses the EEZ, said T Peter, general secretary, National fishworkers union. “The use of industrial fishing gears by the mechanised sector will a negative impact on the marine ecosystem which is already hit by the lockdown as well as poor catch, he added.

Kerala: Government to reduce State’s food dependency

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/govt-to-reduce-states-food-dependency/article31528606.ece

"The State government on Thursday geared for reducing Kerala's dependence on other regions for food by prioritising and speeding up agriculture production. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan addressed a conference via video link with District Collectors and elected members of Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) to prepare 1.9 lakh hectares of fallow land for intense and precision farming in the run up to Onam. Officials ruled out collectivising production and said local bodies would farm fallow land with the consent and participation of the title holders. The State would uphold their right to ownership. The conference flagged the possibility that food-producing regions in the country could suspend exports to Kerala if global adversities such as the COVID-19 crisis dented their agricultural production. Food protectionism Kerala, as a predominantly consumer State, had to break its dependency on food imports from neighbouring States. It had to guard against possible food protectionism by large-scale producers. However, Kerala lacked sufficient land to produce food for its population. Hence, it would harness the latest technology to maximise agricultural production in minimal space. The State would invest Rs.3,860 crores in rearing foodgrains, fruits and vegetables. Inland and marine pisciculture, dairy farming, animal husbandry and traditional fishing sectors

would benefit from the stimulus.

Harvest season Mr. Vijayan insisted that the harvest season for the first crop of vegetables and fruits should coincide with Onam when consumption peaked. Households must rear vegetable gardens and breed fish in backyard ponds. He declared the formation of agriculture clubs to channel the resourcefulness and enterprise of youth into increasing the State's food production and make farming an agreeable and rewarding venture. He also promised the institutionalising of a cold chain process to store, preserve and transport vegetables, fruits, meat, milk and poultry from farm to the table. A fleet of refrigerated trucks would ferry the produce from farms to markets. Mr Vijayan said the State could spare 1,40,000 hectares to cultivate edibles inter-cropped with cash crops. Agriculture Minister V. S. Sunil Kumar, Industries Minister E. P. Jayarajan, Local Self-Government Minister A. C. Moideen, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty and Chief Secretary Tom Jose attended the conference.

Kerala: Days of penury: Fishermen demand special package

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/may/07/days-of-penury-fishermen-demand-special-package-for-2140095.html

"The fishing sector, which is in the slow lane ever since the Covid-19 lockdown was announced, has resumed activities by following conditions like social distancing and odd-even scheme. But for the fisherfolk, the rejuvenation measures are far from satisfactory considering the approaching annual trawling ban. They are of the demand that a special relief package for the sector will have to be announced by the centre/state governments. “Ever since the lockdown, the fishing sector is in shambles. The fishing activities were carried out in a limited manner. But with relaxations in place it was decided to expand the activities in two phases, said an officer of the Fisheries Department. As per an order released by the department on April 30, fishing activities are allowed to resume from May 1 with conditions like reducing the number of fishermen, practising social distancing, introducing the odd-even scheme and adherence to one-day fishing. Meanwhile, T Peter of National Fishworkers' Forum said that the restrictions imposed while resuming fishing activities were unilateral and the fisher community was not taken into confidence. “Some stipulations like alternative day fishing and single-day fishing are unacceptable.

A discussion is needed regarding this. Also, the fishers in penury will have to be provided with a special relief package, said Peter. At the same time, Peter Mathias of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association said that even if the fishing activities resume, a number of mechanised boats will get docked at the harbours due to unavailability of crew. “The crew of the boats are mainly Tamilians from Nagercoil, Thuckalay, Colachel and Kanyakumari. But due to the ban on interstate travel, they couldn't reach here. Even within the state, the movement of fishermen is limited due to the absence of a public transport system, said Mathias. To bail out the sector, a

special package has to be announced. This package should also allocate a sum for conducting maintenance of mechanised fishing boats. Stipulations for resuming fishing activities - Boat seine (Thattumadi)& shore seine (Karamadi) allowed from May 1 - For boat seine, a maximum of five fishermen allowed in each of the two boats of 32 feet - For shore seine, a maximum of 12 fishermen allowed on either end of the nets - Fishermen to keep a distance of one metre from one another - Boats having an overall length of 32 feet and above and up to 45 feet can engage in single-day fishing with a maximum of seven fishermen - From May 4, mechanised boats with an overall length of 45 feet and up to 65 feet are allowed to operate - For that odd-even scheme introduced for mechanised/ring seiners/inboard and traditional vessels - Boats with registration numbers ending in odd numbers to ply on Monday, Wednesday and Friday - Those ending in even numbers on places where Friday remains a holiday, boats ending with odd number could operate on Sunday

Kerala: Online database to depict fish landing centres' proximity to COVID hotspots in Kerala launched

https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/online-database-to-depict-fish-landing-centres-proximity-to-covid-hotspots-in-kerala-launched/1950386/

"The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has launched an online GIS based database depicting the proximity of fish landing centres to Covid-19 hotspots in Kerala. The database offers visualisation of the entire 156 fish landing centres in Kerala in various colour groups in accordance with their geographical proximity with the hotspots identified by the government. The landing centres have been categorised in different groups according to their distance with the hotspots. CMFRI said that this major development would become crucial in monitoring the activities at various fishing centres in the state. The first category, which requires priority in taking precautionary measures, includes fish landing centres located within 3 km of the hotspot. The landing centres within a distance of 3-5 km with the hotspots fall in second category, whereas the third category includes landing centres at a distance of 5-10 km from the hotspots.

The data which is available at the department of health, government of Kerala has been used by a team of CMFRI scientists to develop the online infographics. The team comprises of J Jayasankar, Shelton Padua, C Ramachandran and M A Pradeep. As per the current status of Covid hotspots in Kerala, 17 fish landing centres fall in the first category. These landing centres are located in Thiruvananthapuram (2), Ernakulum (3), Kozhikode (2), Kannur (4) and Kasaragod (6) districts. The GIS database, which is available in CMFRI website (www.cmfri.org.in) and will be updated in tune with the changes in the Covid hotspots, would become helpful to anybody to identify the category of a particular fish landing centre by a click, said A Gopalakrishnan, director of CMFRI. "The initiative will greatly help authorities and

policy makers to monitor the daily activities and take steps for regulatory or safety measures in marine fisheries sector in the backdrop of the Covid-19. The database will become a useful tool to implement safety measures for each landing centres according to their category. The works are in progress to incorporate details of the fish landing centres in other maritime states too with the GIS database, he said.

Kerala: Complete involvement of the government at all levels with the local community in Kerala is a model to emulate

https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-mark-of-zero-on-containment-of-covid-19-cases-in-kerala/article31512638.ece

"With containment strategies in place even before the first case of novel coronavirus was detected on January 30, Kerala appears to have finally hammered the curve flat. On May 1, for the first time, the State reported zero new cases, and again on two consecutive days May 3 and May 4. Zero fresh cases on three days in May appear to be more than a blip. If in April there were early signs of Kerala gaining an upper hand over the virus, its control became clear from the fourth week of April. Since April 22, except on four days, the number of new cases reported has remained either the same or fewer than the number of recoveries. The small number of cases reported so far 499 demonstrates how excellent its containment efforts have been. What is more remarkable is that 462 of those infected have fully recovered, including an elderly couple, aged 93 and 88 years, and there have been just three deaths a case fatality rate of 0.6% against the national average of 3.3%.

The containment success can be traced back to how Kerala did not wait for directions from the Centre but instead led from the front. When the number of cases increased to 12 on March 10, a day before WHO declared the coronavirus a pandemic, Kerala shut down all educational institutions and entertainment centres, banned large gatherings and appealed to people to avoid visiting religious places. If it realised the merits of containing virus transmission by quickly tracing all the contacts during the 2018 Nipah outbreak, it repeated that to perfection this time. Little wonder that on May 2, the ICMR lauded the State for the "unparalleled containment and testing strategies and referred to it as the "Kerala model. But under no circumstances can the State lower its guard as the outbreak can resurge by exploiting the weakest link, as was seen in the sharp spike in Singapore, in dormitories. Kerala has very good health-care infrastructure in place, down to the primary health-care centres. But what sets it apart from the other States is the manner in which it followed textbook epidemiology protocols to the tee, and beyond, and well before the ICMR advocated them, as well as the entire health-care infrastructure working

in tandem despite being decentralised. Political leadership, and the close and complete involvement of the government at all levels with the bureaucracy and local community have been a huge advantage.

The very different health-seeking behaviour and high literacy too have played a pivotal role in the war against the virus. While active involvement of all the stakeholders who complement each other especially during the crisis has worked in Kerala's favour, these are not measures put in place to fight coronavirus but what has been a legacy of the State. It is a success born out of decades-old social revolution and development. This is also the reason why other States, even if they emulate the measures adopted by Kerala to fight the virus, may not be able to achieve the same level of success.

Kerala: Fishers hail lockdown relaxation

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-hail-lockdown-relaxation/article31511395.ece

"The community of fishers has welcomed the lockdown relaxation extended to marine fisheries by the State government but called for clarity on some issues. While the government has allowed large boats with inboard engines to venture out with maximum 20 fishers on board, there is no clarity on the use of carrier boats that accompany the large boats, said Antony Kurisinkal of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. It is also not realistic to ask fishers to operate large boats with 20 people in place of the usual 40, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi. Mr. George also said the government should have allowed large boats to venture out for multi-day fishing. A majority of the 3,800 large boats in operations are engaged in multi-day fishing and it is not economical for them to restrict their ventures to a single day, he added. V.D. Majeendran of the Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation welcomed the relaxations that had benefited the small operators in a big way. The small boat owners were happy and were able to make both ends meet during these difficult times. But the government should play a proactive role and ensure the regulations are adhered to strictly, he said. Mr. Antony said fishers, especially those in Alappuzha, had to travel by road to harbours like Chellanam and Fort Kochi to venture out in their boats. The police are keeping a watch on movement of people and often these fishers are not allowed to cross the district border. He said nearly 1,200 fishers from Alappuzha come daily to Chellanam and Fort Kochi these days and issuing passes in advance would help them overcome the travel woes. The passes are issued often after 8 a.m. and it is not possible to wait till the time for fishing operations to start on a daily basis, he said.

Kerala: Curbs tightened in 8 panchayats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/curbs-tightened-in-8-

panchayats/article31491348.ece

"The district administration has tightened the restrictions in eight panchayats that were declared hotspots a day ago. These included Amboori, Kunnathukal, Parassala, Vellarada, Kulathoor and Karode, all of which shared border with Kanyakumari, and Athiyannoor and Balaramapuram, both of which were adjacent to Neyyattinkara municipality that was designated hotspot a few days ago. The restrictions that were in place in Ambalathara and Kalippankulam in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation have been lifted. As many as 231 people were placed in isolation on Saturday, increasing the number of those quarantined in the district to 2,526. Eleven people were admitted to various hospitals with symptoms of the infection. In addition, 81 samples were collected by health authorities in the district to be sent for examination. The Thiruvananthapuram City police booked 68 people for violating lockdown norms and seized 52 vehicles. Forty-four motorists were penalised for flouting the odd-even scheme for vehicles.

Nineteen people were booked for failing to wear masks outdoors. Tension prevailed in Pulluvila, near Kanjiramkulam, when a group of shore seine (‘kambavala') fishermen protested against the police for denying permission to operate their fishing boats in accordance with the government guidelines. The police later withdrew from the area after they obtained clarity regarding the recent government order that permitted fishing activities. Three people were taken into custody in Vembayam late Friday after they were found transporting rotten fish in a container lorry. Migrants leave for home Meanwhile, 1,124 migrant labourers left for their native places in Jharkhand aboard a special train on Saturday. Their 36-hour long journey to the Hatia railway station in Ranchi commenced from Thiruvananthapuram Central around 3.45 p.m.As many as 510 of those who boarded the train resided in labour camps in Vizhinjam.

Kerala: Fishers air concerns over steps to increase production

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-air-concerns-over-steps-to-increase-production/article31505585.ece

"Fishermen have called for a rethink on a set of suggestions put forward by the State government to increase fish production. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had recently called for steps like introduction of cage farming and bringing idle holdings under fish culture to increase production. However, such steps should be taken keeping the interests of small and marginal fishers in mind, said Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi. Convener of the Aikya Vedhi Charles George said that there was no question on the importance of increasing fish production in the State. Steps should be taken to ensure fish availability, he said. “However, when steps are taken to increase fish production, they should involve traditional fishers who make a living out of fishing activities. Their rights should be the foremost concern, he said. The ownership of new enterprises to increase fish production should rest with fishermen or groups of fishermen, said

Mr. George. “Steps to increase fish production are welcome but they should not alienate the fishing community, said V.D. Majeendran of Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. He said that increasing fish production would involve investments in new projects and the traditional community of fishers should not be alienated or kept away from these enterprises. Mr. George said that any move in which the fishing community did not have a definite say would be opposed strongly by the community. He said the government should step in to improve the condition of inland fisheries resources. The condition of the Vembanad lake, the largest brackish water system in the world, was pathetic, he said. There was pollution as well as unrestricted encroachment on the waterbody, which had landed traditional fishermen in trouble, he said.

Kerala: CIFT expects Rs.130-cr loss to Kerala fishermen due to lockdown

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/cift-expects-130-cr-loss-to-kerala-fishermen-due-to-lockdown/article31498897.ece

"The Central Institute of Fisheries Technology has estimated an income loss of ?130 crore to fishermen in Kerala during the lockdown period. According to CIFT experts, most fishers were confined to their homes and not able to go out fishing. Fishermen stranded at seas on-board trawlers could not land as landing centres were closed. There are about 22,000 crafts that ply the Kerala coast of which, 27 per cent are non-motorised, 51 per cent motorised and 22 per cent mechanised with a fish production of about 6.4 lakh tonnes. As the uncertainty in the sector due to pandemic continues, the institute has come up with suggestions that will help to revive the sector, on which around 10 lakh labourers depend for their livelihood. According to experts, fishermen can be allowed on board with proper preventive measures in place and following all guidelines as stipulated by the government.

Need for review CIFT Director, CN Ravishankar, suggested reviewing the current restriction of five crew, as this has excluded a large portion of fishers from going fishing. Social distancing and proper sanitisation practices should be followed on-board and during landing. Awareness should be created through social media and also traditional methods to ensure that all the stakeholders along the supply chain are sensitised to the preventive measures to be taken. Price fixation has been taken over by harbour management committees. This has reduced the fluctuations in primary market prices, as the price of a particular species remains the same no matter when it is landed. This practice can continue even after the lockdown is completely lifted and conditions return to normal as this is beneficial to both the fisherman and the consumer. Bringing fish to landing centres and harbours are also to be carried out amidst restrictions. This is mainly to avoid overcrowding, which is normally a distinct feature in these places, with several stakeholders like auctioneers, loading and unloading workers, ice-breaking workers, traders, people engaged in transporting fish, etc., being found inside landing centres

and harbours.

Kerala: Three sectors incur Rs. 3,300-crore loss

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/three-sectors-incur-3300-crore-loss/article31476400.ece

"Pegging the cumulative losses suffered by Kerala's agriculture, fisheries and animal husbandry sectors in March and April owing to the onset of COVID-19 at Rs.3,300 crore, the State Planning Board has recommended measures for their revival. Cash crops have been deleteriously impacted by the global trade shutdown, while fall in demand and prices, non-availability of labour and disruption of supply chains have marred food crops. The sector is estimated to have lost Rs.1,570.75 crore in crop husbandry and another Rs.200.3 crore in wages in this period. It has proposed bringing under paddy cultivation an additional 25,000 hectares in the next two years to reduce Kerala's dependence on other States for rice. Vegetable production, estimated to be 12.12 lakh tonnes a year, can be doubled by developing the 14 special agriculture zones (SAZ) already identified.

The recommendations also include bringing in a law to streamline the State's farm marketing system and creation of 'land armies' groups of workers who would travel from village to village and undertake operations during crises. It has asked the State government to demand a ban on rubber imports for a year or at least till the stock available in the market is exhausted. "Anticipated crop losses are relatively high because April-May is usually the peak cropping period in the region, says the report. With some 1,15,668 fisher families and 23,881 families in the fisheries-allied sectors affected by the lockdown, the sector is estimated to be poorer by Rs.1,371 crore. Exports have dwindled to just 1% and the pandemic-induced loss in the quantity of seafood exported for two months is about 16,000 tonnes, with an estimated turnover loss of ?600 crore. The board has recommended that the Centre be urged for a economic package for the sector with elements such as waiver of interest for loans, and deferred payment of loans. With trawling ban coming in force from June, the State should focus on alternative livelihoods for the fishers. A well laid-out plan to reform the fish supply chain should begin immediately and practices such as inland aquaculture should be promoted with the help of local bodies and Kudumbashree. The animal husbandry sector, also affected bybird flu, incurred losses are estimated to be about Rs.181 crore.

Kerala: Harbours to ensure smooth trade by small-scale fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/harbours-to-ensure-smooth-trade-by-small-scale-fishers/article31473764.ece

"The functioning of all the four fishing harbours in Kozhikode district has been rearranged to make them beneficial to small-scale fishers and ensure their smooth trade with buyers by maintaining the special protocol laid down by the Health Department to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Though the entry of public will be restricted in harbour areas till the end of the lockdown period, there will not be any ban on the entry of fish merchants who have special tokens. The Chombal harbour, which remained shut, too is functional now. The harbour was thrown open for business on Thursday following a meeting chaired by District Collector Seeram Sambasiva Rao with fishermen's representatives and local body leaders in the area. Boats carrying not more than five fishers will be allowed to be operated from the harbours during the lockdown period. Harbour management societies are now functioning in Koyilandy, Puthiyappa, Beypore and Chombal harbours to ensure healthy business. Since the conventional style of auctioning has remained suspended due to the lockdown, the management societies will be primarily responsible for fixing the wholesale price in consultation with the district-level authorities.

The price will be displayed at the entrance of the harbours to comply with the district administration's order. "In Beypore, about 200 small fishing boats are back on track. The daily catch is sold here in a healthy way under the supervision of the harbour management societies and Fisheries Department staff, says K. Preman, a member of the Beypore Harbour Management Society. He adds that the committee is also getting the support of the police to ensure trouble-free trade in the area. Fishers who reach the harbours have also been asked to maintain social distancing. In some harbours, barriers have been provided to manage the rush of wholesale buyers who reach the spot from 6 a.m. The support of trade unions have also been sought to control the rush and ensure better coordination with the Harbour Engineering and Fisheries Department. According to Fisheries Department officials, a special monitoring committee is now functional in the district to closely watch the price fluctuation of available stock in the market. Traders will not be allowed to determine the price on their own as it will be treated as a direct violation of the district-level guidelines and the price fixing mechanism. Helpline numbers have also been given for registering public complaints on unfair fish price

Kerala: Allow 20m-long boats to resume fishing, boat owners urge govt

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/apr/30/allow-20m-long-boats-to-resume-fishing-boat-owners-urge-govt-2137108.html

"The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has submitted a memorandum to the principal secretary (Fisheries) urging the official to allow boats that are 20m-long to resume fishing in the state. Though the Centre has issued two notifications relaxing lockdown restrictions for resuming fishing operations, the state government has only allowed that are 10m-long, to carry out fishing. "There are not many boats in the category in the state, said general secretary of the association Joseph Xavier Kalapurackal. He said around 1,600 fishing boats in the 20m category operate and 1,200 of them are awaiting the government's permission to return to the sea. "The livelihood of fishermen has been badly affected due to the lockdown which has been in place for over a month. With the 61-day trawling ban set to begin on June 1, fishermen should be allowed to return to work and save some money for sustaining themselves during the ban, he said.

Covid-19: Kerala wants lockdown extension till 15 May

https://www.livemint.com/news/india/covid-19-kerala-wants-lockdown-extension-till-15-may-11587992474066.html

"Kerala pitched for a partial lockdown to continue until 15 May in a written note shared with the prime minister's meeting with chief ministers on Monday. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said he did not attend the meet himself as only a few states were supposed to speak, but had shared the suggestions with home minister Amit Shah over the phone on Sunday night. ""Kerala has asked the Centre to be careful in relaxing the lockdown. Specialties of states need to be factored into the relaxation norms. A partial lockdown can continue until 15 May and further decisions can be taken based on the then situation,"" Vijayan told reporters, detailing the suggestions shared."Districts with no fresh cases can be reopened but with a ban on public transportation and mass gatherings. Inter-state and inter-district travels should also be restricted until 15 May,"" he said. ""The demand for testing and PPE kits are skyrocketing. Center should take responsibility for procuring the kits,"" he added. ""Expats with a meagre income, who live in labour camps, in jails, foreign students whose scholarships have stopped need to come back.

People who have gone for short visits abroad or medical needs should also be given priority among the returnees. It will be difficult for many of them to pay for their travel expense now, so the center should pay for their air tickets,"" he said."Center should also announce a package for expat returnees, we should be able to use their skills. We have also reinstated our demands for non-stop trains to return 4 lakh migrants in Kerala back to their homes. The safety of Malayalee nurses and other health workers in the rest of India is also a cause of concern for

Kerala. We have already written to several states on this matter, the center also needs to discuss this with states,"" said Vijayan. Kerala has also listed out its financial distress asking for a central compensation package. ""An expert study says in the 2020-21 financial year, in the first quarter Kerala's Gross State Domestic Product alone would decline by Rs.80000 crore. The losses will increase further if situations do not ease,"" said Vijayan. ""Casual labourers in 30000 small enterprises have lost Rs.14000 crore. Hotels and restaurants have lost Rs.6000 crore and 14000 crore in that order. The fishing villages and IT (Information Technology) sectors have seen massive employment losses. Small vendors are severely hit and are pushed into a financial crisis. The center should form a package under national disaster management and should ensure income support for the distressed. There should be interest-free loans of 2 lakh to 5 lakh and additional subsidies,"" he said.

Kerala: How small fishers in Kerala's Poonthura benefited from COVID time auction system

https://english.manoramaonline.com/news/kerala/2020/04/28/how-small-fishers-in-poonthura-village-benefitted-from-new-auction-system-during-covid-19-lockdown.html

"Marine fishing in India has largely come to a standstill in the wake of COVID19 outbreak. In Kerala, the government has banned operation of mechanised boats. But small scale beach landing crafts are allowed to ensure fishers' sustenance and food security needs of the society. This relaxation is subject to the strict provisions that they should maintain physical distancing at sea and fish landing centres. Controlling the highly interactive fish landing centres in these times is a daunting task. Physical distancing hardly works in a market context where auctioning of the commodity is the norm. All public health warnings will be thrown to the fishy wind that blows across such fish marketing centres. Village-level efforts And yet, in some of the most densely populated fishing villages in Kerala, nay India, the lessons from trial and error and the collaborative efforts of local institutions, fishermen and women, officials of cooperatives, state administration and the police seem to have achieved the impossible.

At least for the moment. Of course, there is still a long way to go to perfect a fish selling system which is based on physical distancing, standardisation of weights and predictable prices. But numerous village-level initiatives in Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam districts are showing the way forward. Poonthura model Poonthura is a large fishing village within the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation limits. It has a population of nearly 10,000 and a coastline length of 1.2 kilometres of which one whole kilometre is stonewalled due to constant sea erosion and unfit for beaching fishing boats. Initially, the Church in this village - the most powerful socio-religious institution in any Christian fishing village - in keeping with the requirements of the lockdown, banned all fishing activities knowing that order would be difficult to maintain. But fishing continued in smaller and far less densely populated villages

along the same coast. Fishers using small boats brought in small amounts of fish. Fish sales were organised by the initiative of the fishers, youth in the village, the parish priests and the police who were called to ensure that chaos did not ensue if a whole lot of buyers turned up on the beach. The fishers of Poonthura spent a few days obeying the Church diktat. But they became increasingly restless when they heard that neighbouring villagers' tales of fishing and big earnings. One night, a few fishers in Poonthura broke the ban. They got a bumper catch of squid that fetched Rs. 2.5 lakh. Their joy, however, was short-lived. The Church committee intervened and forced them to remit their bonanza to its fund after deducting the operating costs for their illegal venture.

Following this, a few of the fisher members of the Matsyafed Cooperative in Poonthura held a meeting with the parish priest. They suggested ways for gradually reopening fishing, particularly in the light of the new government order permitting small-scale fishing, subject to the conditions of physical distancing and other public health considerations. The meeting concluded without arriving at a consensus. This prompted the cooperative members to create a multi-stakeholder committee of 22 members representing all the different interests involved in the fishing and fish selling activities of the village. The committee includes member and non-member fishers of the co-operative, private fish auctioneers, women fish vendors, youth and elders of the village, officials of the Matsyafed and the church committee. This committee decided to reopen fishing and regulate selling from April 17. The district collector hailed the decision, but he warned that fishing and selling would be stopped immediately if the activities violated physical distancing and public health norms. Difficulties In Poonthura, much of the village coastline is stonewalled and it cannot be used to land fish or sell in keeping with the stipulated norms. There is only one stretch of beach at the end of the village that could be used for organised fish selling. However, this area had no proper road access. It was a major limitation to ensure orderly flow of people and fish.

The committee got over this physical impediment by setting up two check-posts at the entry point. Vehicles coming to transport fish to the retail markets used one while fish buyers used the other. They were issued 15 tokens at a time that are valid for 45 minutes. How it worked At the sandy portion of the beach ahead, five numbered and enclosed spaces have been created with barricades. Sorted fish brought from the boats in boxes are displayed and weighed here. Each barricade has 15 chairs - spaced out by 1.5 metres - to seat the buyers. The buyers will be allowed into the numbered barricades when the fish arrives, but only after police verify their entry tokens and face masks. The youth volunteers, Matsyafed officials and the police exhibit great efficiency and courtesy in their dealings. The committee has prepared a price list for each fish species. This will be revised every two days and displayed prominently outside the stalls. Buyers will be issued payment receipts from the cooperative. Initial days The initial three days were chaotic. High decibel shouting and disagreements between fishers and organisers rented the air. Questions were raised about prices and weighing. Buyers haggled over which fish

variety should be sold first. The new order appears to have disappointed traditional auctioneers as they find themselves marginalised. Fishing and fish buying involve a huge element of luck. A lottery element is innate to it. But ability, tact, quick judgement and prowess are the key ingredients of success.

In one sense, bringing new order is creating chaos to the current system. But this is a process of learning. New social innovations can happen only like this. There are always gainers and losers. There must be ways to compensate or co-opt the losers least they try to sabotage the system. Auctioneers are the big losers in Poonthura and other large fishing villages. They are mostly influential persons in the church and society and pose a threat to the system. They provide the credit which keeps fishing going. Fishers are the biggest gainers in this process. They benefit from negotiated fixed prices without fear of a slump when the fish catch is on the higher side. The women and men – particularly the smaller vendors – stand to gain if they can organise themselves into small groups, pool their funds and purchase the premium species directly from the fishers, and sell it to the elite city consumers. Whether this new COVID-19 orientation to fishing and fish marketing will establish a new order will depend on how long we will keep these strict lockdown regulations in place and on whether a large enough number of key stakeholders see gain from the new practices. The support of local socio-religious institutions, government agencies and civil society will be key to ensure that this will be more than a transient experiment in social engineering.

Kerala: We are sinking, say fisherfolk

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/apr/25/we-are-sinking-say-fisherfolk-2134829.html

"The pandemic-induced lockdown has spared none in the fisheries sector. Fishermen, fish workers, traders and exporters have sufferedhuge losses during the so-called period for the fisherfolk. While large motorised boats have been barred from venturing into the sea, country boat fishermen are also hit by the absence of workers and zero transport of ice. Despite the Centre exempting the fisheries sector from lockdown restrictions on April 10 and permitting the movement of country boats with a maximum of five fishers, the community believes the sector requires more, along with a compensation package, to be revived. Ernakulam district has five landing spots, namely two at the Munambam harbour, one each at Chellanam and the Thoppumpady Kochi Fisheries harbour and a private jetty at Vyttila. Country boats, or traditional boats as specified by the Centre, however, constitute a low percentage in these harbours.

“By March 30, smaller boats were allowed to venture into the sea. But, these won't be able to handle a large catch. Chellanam has several such boats -- as a result, half the number of boats at the harbour can resume work. This amounts to just 30 per cent of the catch. But such non-

mechanised and non-motorised boats in Kerala are just about one per cent. Mass production and the bulk catch -- the remaining 70 per cent -- is brought in by the larger boats that are mechanised and motorised. From Thoppumpady harbour itself, 600 long-line gillnet boats, 3,500 trawl net boats and more than 500 in-board vessels are responsible for 70 per cent of the catch. And they can't operate owing to the lockdown restrictions, said Charles George, president, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi. Charles stressed on the almost non-availability of fish since last January. “The sector is in a shambles. We had a meeting last November wherein we demanded a compensation package comprising `5,000 per fisherman. But the Government hasn't followed up on the same, he said. Trawling ban The upcoming trawling ban could be the final nail in the coffin for the fisher community. “Therefore, it is imperative to resume our normal operations soon after May 3. The current catch is sold via Matsyafeed and Fisheries Department as conventional auction procedures have been suspended for now, said M Majeed, coordination secretary, Thoppumpady Kochi Fisheries harbour. Last year this time, the sector had a `50-crore worth of landing, according to Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, general secretary, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association. “Most boats above 20m in length are usually handled by Tamilians. There are about 1,500 boats 20-m boats in our state, regardless of functionality.

Allowing these boats to venture into the sea will be massive support in itself from the government. It will go a long way in the lives of the fisherfolk. But unfortunately, our woes are lost on the Fisheries Department, he said. What can be done? According to Joseph, the sector can be rejuvenated only under a network such as Kudumbashree. “I firmly believe that all landing centres must have Kudumbashree women to market fresh and good-quality fish, devoid of chemicals. Streamlining them and handing it over to their network can certainly make the industry flourish. It is highly likely that they will do a better job than men, he said. Corporation opposition leader K J Antony, who hails from a traditional fishing background, opined that the existing compensation packages for fishermen will not suffice. “Another issue is the lack of fish in our waters. It is also to be noted that not all members of the Welfare Board practise the craft. The number of effective fishermen has largely decreased.A study should be undertaken on the sector which protects those who currently earn a living out of fishing while simultaneously encourage the next generation to continue the means. Based on this study, packages must be allotted, he added. Harbours Ernakulam district has five landing spots, namely two at the Munambam harbour, one each at Chellanam and the Thoppumpady Kochi Fisheries harbour and a private jetty at Vyttila. Country boats, or traditional boats as specified by the Centre, however, constitute a low percentage in these harbours. `1,500 cr is the loss suffered by mechanised fishing boat owners in the state. 15,000 people work in this sector all over the state

Kerala: Fisherfolk hooked on new model of fish sales

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/kerala-fisherfolk-hooked-on-new-model-of-fish-sales/article31442586.ece

"However, experts caution against doing away with traditional auction method Kerala government's newly-introduced system to sell fish during the lockdown period as against the traditional auction method seems to be gaining popularity among fisherfolk in fetching better returns. The government had introduced the new way as a temporary measure by entrusting harbour management societies to monitor fish sales. The system, which avoided middlemen, is reported to have boosted the earnings of the fishing community. Fisheries department officials admitted that the arrangement is benefiting the community in ensuring a single price for the catch throughout the day. Earlier, the catch from boats returning late was sold at half the price of the first boat. However, in the new structure, both first and last boats reaching the shore will get the same price for the catch. The prices of the catch have been fixed based on the average price of each variety during the last seven days. The department is thinking of continuing with the new system, it is learnt. It may be recalled that there have been repeated requests from boat owners and the fishing community to stop the involvement of middlemen in the sale of fish. Charles George, general secretary of Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (TUCI), said the new initiatives are providing a fair price for the catch.

However, more discussions are needed to continue with the reforms, with the involvement of all stakeholders. The difference in the landing cost of fish and its retail prices have been highlighted by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. He also urged the government to initiate measures for direct supply to consumers' doorstep from the landing centres, as practised in several countries. There is a need to fix procurement and floor prices and the government should set up procurement centres, cold storages in harbours and landing centres. The unsold quantities should be procured by Matsyafed to sell to companies that make ready-to-cook, ready-to-eat products. The online sale of fish, like Uber Eats model, should be encouraged by entrusting the youth in the community with vehicles and chill boxes, he added. Role of auctions However, experts in the fisheries sector opine that auctions play a major role in determining fish prices, ensuring better marketing for the catch, and creating demand. The supply pattern in the business has been facilitated and controlled by auction agents. Most of the fishers, including the traditional community, have an understanding with auctioneers and their credits are linked with the marketing of the catch. It is to be noted that even during the demonetisation period, the fishing in Kerala continued unabated, because of the involvement of auctioneers. According to them, fixing a procurement price would not be a difficult task in the event of marginal landings where the demand is catered by the traditional sector with a share of less than 7-8 per cent. But during large-scale landings generated by the motorised and mechanised sector, the price realisation would be difficult. It is the quality, quantity and place of catch, size and method of catch that determines the prices. The government's intervention in fixing a procurement price, floor price or support price is a welcome move if it provides

measures such as enabling e-auction across the landing centres. This would assure the quality of fish, quantity, place of origin, size differentials, so that more buyers would be involved virtually and could participate and help the auction process a better price realisation, experts added.

Kerala: Fishermen welcome ban on middlemen during lockdown, call it a boon

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/kerala-fishermen-welcome-ban-middlemen-during-lockdown-call-it-boon-123190

"Vincent, a fisherman from Vizhinjam in Kerala, says the lockdown restrictions have caused some damage to the fishing industry but adds that there are positive aspects to it. He is happy that bidding is not allowed now and there are no middlemen between them and the buyers. Bidders, who have a ready supply of cash, work in harbours and buy fish in bulk from fishermen for low rates. In some harbours, they don't permit fish sellers to buy the fish directly from the fishermen. ""There are many local bidders here who don't do any work and get money. They buy fish from us in large quantities for cheap rates and sell the stock at higher rates. Now we get good value for the fish we catch,"" Vincent says."During these lockdown days, people directly come here to buy fish The fish sellers also get fish from us directly, some collect fish to deliver at houses in the city. Even though the price is a little high, people are ready to buy,"" he adds. Bidders are in a more powerful position than the fishermen and this has always been an issue for the community.

"In many parts of Kerala, they are called tharakans. These middlemen pay an amount in advance to the fishermen and the latter become debtors to them. Poor fishermen are bound to give the fish to these people at the rates that they dictate. What happens is that the fishermen get a very low income and the people who finally buy the fish pay a much higher price. These middlemen are also responsible for adulterating fish with chemicals to preserve it for a longer period, "" T Peter, National Fishermen Forum General Secretary, says. In Valiyathura, a comparatively small fish landing centre in Thiruvananthapuram, there are no middlemen and fish retailers directly buy the fish by bidding for it themselves."Here we bid for the fish directly from the boat owners. We don't have bidders who take a cut. Earlier, they were around and would take a major portion of our income. But luckily, it was stopped,"" Mariya, a fish seller from Valiyathura, says. Peter says that bidding is a major issue in all the large harbours in Kerala. Smaller fish landing spots like Valiyathura, however, are exempted from middlemen."No traditional fisherman is ever free from poverty. We are always in need of money. That is when these tharakans offer us a huge amount in advance and tempt us. We may need the amount to pay our daughter's college fees or for her wedding expenses or to renovate our house. Once we have taken the money, we have to give them double the quantity of fish for that amount. If we sell the quantity of fish we give them directly through fish sellers, we get a

good income. In a way, our helplessness was being misused by these people,"" Benny, a fisherman from Kochi, tells TNM. Peter calls it a revolutionary step by the government to ban bidding as part of social distancing in harbours.

The price of the fish is now being decided by a harbour society."We have been demanding this for the last many years. Matsyafed (Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development) by the Kerala government was formed to avoid middlemen and ensure good income for fishermen. But even that was not so successful as these middlemen dominate us. They are backed by political outfits,"" Peter adds. He says that cooperative societies should function in the harbours to ensure good rates for the fishermen, and customers should get fresh fish at reasonable rates."There are more than 220 fishing villages in Kerala and more than 110 inland fishing villages. Each village should have cooperative societies. Let all political party members from the community be a part of it. It should be between fishermen and their customers. We don't need middlemen,"" he says, noting that many fishing villages have successfully implemented this arrangement. He also says that in other states like Maharashtra, the cooperative societies play a major role in the development of the fishing community. As per the new government rule, all traditional fishing except fishing using gill nets (kambavala) and seine boats (thattamadi) are allowed. Kambavala and Thattamadi, where more than 50 fishermen form groups for fishing, were banned in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus. In any case, not many fishermen follow these practices. There are more than 20,000 traditional fishing boats in Kerala and there are only 4,500 kambavala fishermen in the state.

Kerala: Fishers severely impacted by Covid-19

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/23/fishers-severely-impacted-by-covid-19-2133893.html

"Restriction on fishing activities due to the lockdown declared in the wake of Covid-19 has severely ravaged the livelihood of fisherfolks in the state capital. With the state government unwilling to lift the ban imposed on traditional fishing using gill nets (kambavala) and seine boats (thattamadi) to curb the spread of the pandemic, artisanal fishermen in the coastal villages of the capital are on a warpath. In a mark of protest, hundreds of traditional fishermen ventured into the sea violating restrictions imposed as part of the lockdown on Tuesday. Having been out of work for the past several weeks, their livelihood has been severely affected. Many are yet to get `2,000 announced by the state government. “We are facing acute poverty and I cannot let my family starve. We had waited patiently for the past four weeks listening to the authorities. First, they asked us to wait till April 14 and then April 20. We are ready to adhere to all social-distancing norms put in place. We don't want to challenge the authorities; this is a matter of survival, says 72-year-old B Nijoob, a fisherman from Beemapally who uses kambavala. He is one of the 4,500 kambavala fishermen in the district.

The police and district authorities are on their toes enforcing restrictions in the coastal villages here. The government has come up with strict norms to regulate fishing activities and has banned auctioning of fish. As per the current directive, fisherman can sell their catch without an open auction and the price of the fish will be fixed by the harbour management society. However, the decision hasn't gone down well with many. "The police ordered us not to go fishing. Around 30 to 40 fishermen are involved in the operations of a single kambavala, alleged Abdul Nazir, another fisherman. The fishermen have decided to go ahead with fishing despite the restrictions. President of Kambavala Thozhilali Federation Tony Oliver said life is impossible for the hundreds of fishermen depending on traditional fishing. "The fishermen are ready to adhere to social-distancing norms while operating the kambavala. But it has been over a month and we cannot continue like this. The majority of us don't have a membership with the welfare board and are ineligible for the benefits which makes life worse, said Tony. He said that discussions are being held to resolve the issue. At the same time, some fishermen are unable to go fishing because of sea advancement and erosion. Fisherman Antony Stancilis said that there was no shore to operate karamadi (drag net) at Kuzhivilakam in Valiyathura. "Now we are forced to move to Shankhumukham, which is full already. We can fish only when the fishermen at Shankhumukham are not operating karamadi, said Antony.

Kerala: Token system' introduced to identify local fish catch

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/token-system-introduced-to-identify-local-fish-catch/article31398830.ece

"The Kozhikode Municipal Corporation introduced a 'token system' on Tuesday to identify fish caught from local harbours. The move comes in the wake of complaints that imported fish is being sold by many vendors at much higher prices claiming to be fresh catch from local harbours. Corporation Secretary Binu Francis said that fishing was authorised only in Beypore, Puthiyappa and Vellayil harbours in the city during the lockdown period and the catch constituted less than 1% of the total fish sold in the city. Besides, more than half of it was sold through Matsyafed outlets. Only the remaining fish was sold by local vendors, he said. However, it has come to the notice of the corporation that several local vendors charged double for fish, claiming it to be local catch. Under the new system, vendors who purchase fish from local harbours will be issued a token, which is in fact a certificate that the fish is local catch. Vendors have to display the token in their shops or on the vehicles. The wholesale price list of the fish issued by the harbours every day will be the base for the price of the fish. Vendors can add a maximum of 20% profit to the base price. The corporation secretary called upon the public to keep an eye out for frauds who sell imported fish at higher rates.

Kerala: Scarcity of ice cited as reason for fish contamination

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/scarcity-of-ice-cited-as-reason-for-fish-

contamination/article31382399.ece

"Food safety officials have their job cut out in fish markets these days. Whenever they carry out an inspection, quintals of contaminated fish are destroyed. With more than 3.5 tonnes of contaminated fish getting destroyed in Kozhikode district alone over the past few weeks, officials are hard-pressed to find an effective solution to avoid the contamination of fish. Scarcity of industrial ice is the major reason for the contamination of fish. Only a few ice factories are functioning in the district due to the lockdown. Though fresh fish has to be stored in sub-zero temperatures until it reaches consumers, vendors are finding it difficult to adhere to norms due to the scarcity of ice. "Fish needs to be stored in equal amounts of ice at the storage centre, during transportation, and in retail shops. Otherwise, it will lead to contamination, said P.K. Aleyamma, Assistant Food Safety Commissioner in Kozhikode. Because of the high demand for fish even during the lockdown period, vendors are hell-bent on making it available in the market. However, there are concerns over the quality of fish available now. "The public should be aware of the fact that there will be problems with fish in this situation, since we don't have much fishing happening here. We need to restrict our fish intake for the time being, Ms. Aleyamma added.

Kerala: Soon, ID cards for fishers stranded in Kozhikode

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/kozhikode/soon-id-cards-for-fishers-stranded-in-kozhikode/article31389689.ece

"With the support of Home Guards, the police have started collecting details of migrant fish workers stranded at various harbours and fish landing centres in the district, following the declaration of the nation-wide lockdown. To follow social distancing norms and other safety measures, the details will be collected in batches, taking into account the fish workers' convenience. The move aims primarily to issue identity cards for all such labourers, who can use it later for claiming various benefits announced by the State and Union governments. As of now, many do not have documents to prove their identity or address. With limitations on space for opening special relief camps for stranded fishers, they are now staying in fishing boats anchored at Puthiyappa, Koyilandy, Chombala and Beypore harbours. Various fishermen's associations and government departments are at work to provide them essential items during the lockdown.

At labour camps According to the police, a similar data collection drive is also being organised for migrant labourers accommodated in various labour camps. Since all such camps have been declared relief camps by the District Collector and extended special care, the field-level data collection is an easy job, they say. Though the police had earlier initiated such a data collection drive to issue identity cards for migrant labourers, it had not succeeded in covering even 50% of the total migrant workforce within Kozhikode city limits. Fish workers formed the majority

of the excluded group as they were mostly out at sea during the data collection drives. Home Guards engaged in the data collection drive say the stranded fishers have been cooperating with them to record details required for the preparation of identity cards. Rough sleepers The police have also decided to issue identity cards for over 600 rough sleepers who were recently given temporary accommodation at East Hill. The details of almost all such persons have been collected for the purpose.

Kerala: Surveillance off Kozhikode coast strengthened

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kozhikode/surveillance-off-kozhikode-coast-strengthened/articleshow/75228772.cms

"The marine enforcement wing of the fisheries department has strengthened sea patrolling off the Kozhikode coast following ban on fishing by mechanized fishing vessels. Following lockdown only small boats are allowed to carry out fishing off the coast. The marine enforcement wing is keeping tabs along the Chaliyam-Azhiyur stretch of the coast to prevent unauthorized fishing. Patrolling is carried out day and night to prevent the entry of mechanized fishing boats to the sea for fishing. The marine enforcement officials have so far impounded 5 vessels, which violated the lockdown regulations. The boats were impounded during patrolling off Koyilandy and Puthiyappa coasts. Marine enforcement squads are operating from all four harbours in the district, said an official with fisheries department. They are depending on rented fishing boats for the patrolling in the absence of their own patrolling boats. The patrolling teams operate in sea limit up to 12 nautical miles (22km) off Kozhikode coast. The marine enforcement wing is giving stress to sea limits off the existing harbours in the district, said an official with the fisheries department. Besides, surveillance is on at Beypore, Puthiyappa, Koyilandy and Chombal harbours, the official said. The fisheries department officials and police are also keeping surveillance at fish landing centres at Chaliyam, Thikkodi, Kainatti, Pallithazha, Chaliyam, Payyoli, Moodadi and Vellayil. District collector had recently banned the operation of fish landing centres to avoid Covid-19 spread. The marine enforcement wing of the department is on high alert to protect the livelihood of traditional fishermen, said the official. The squads of the department will continue inspections till the end of the lockdown period, the official added. Large-scale fishing by big vessels have been banned to avoid rush at harbours. Auction of fish is also prohibited at harbours to avoid the violation of lockdown regulations. As per the existing directions, only small country boats can go for fishing. The landing of fishing boats is permitted only at harbours.

Kerala: Despite exemption from lockdown, Kerala's fisheries sector yet to resume activities

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/apr/19/despite-exemption-from-

lockdown-keralas-fisheries-sector-yet-to-resume-activities-2132420.html

"Though the Union Government issued an order on April 10 exempting the fisheries sector from lockdown guidelines, the fisheries sector in the state is unable to resume operations due to the non-availability of workers and restrictions imposed on transportation. The government had exempted ""Operations of the fishing (marine), aquaculture industry including feeding and maintenance, harvesting, processing, packaging, cold chain, sale and marketing, hatcheries, feed plants, commercial aquaria, movement of fish and shrimp products and workers for all these activities"" from the lockdown advisory, subject to compliance to the restrictions like social distancing and proper hygiene practices. However, the mechanised boats are unable to resume operations as most of the workers have returned to their native places as fishing activities were stopped. ""Most of the boat workers come from Colachel and Thoothukudi area in Tamil Nadu and these workers had returned to their native places before the lockdown was imposed due to scare of transmission. We can resume fishing activities only if the workers return. Besides, we need some proactive measures as the sector has plunged into crisis due to depletion of fish stocks and hostile attitude of the Fisheries Department,"" said All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association president Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal.

The fish processing industries are also not able to resume activities due to lockdown restrictions. ""As the mechanised boats are not able to resume operations, we are unable to source the fish products. Even if they bring fish, we cannot process shrimp as the peeling units are not functioning. For exporting the processed fish, we need to test the samples and obtain export certification. As all the offices are closed there is difficulty in getting the consignment tested,"" said Seafood Exporters Association of India Kerala region president Alex K Ninan. Traditional fishermen are willing to resume fishing activities but are concerned about selling the catch as transporting the fish to the markets is a big challenge.

Kerala: Govt defers plans to allow full scale fishing for now

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/19/govt-defers-plans-to-allow-full-scale-fishing-for-now-2132187.html

"Dashing the hopes of operators of large mechanised boats, the government has deferred plans to allow full scale fishing in the state. Now, the trawlers are unlikely to operate till the time the lockdown is lifted, a source said. The boat operators had made the request after the Centre allowed states to take the call on the issue without compromising on social distancing. “Presently, the coastal zone is relatively safe in terms of Covid incidence. We cannot take any decision that may accelerate the spread, said a Fisheries Ministry official. According to him, it will be difficult to maintain social distancing in harbours in the event of more fishing vessels returning with the catch. “All that we can do now is to allow more small boats in a step by step manner and streamline the sale of fish, said the officer. “Even if we allow trawlers, the fish

supply chain mechanism cannot be streamlined. The processing plants have been shut and exports banned, he said.

All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators' Association (AKFBOA) said the states along the Western coast such as Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra have allowed trawlers to operate. It called upon the government to lift the ban lest the fishing sector should be irrevocably paralysed. "Besides being a major revenue earner for the government, there are around three lakh fisher households relying on the sector, said Peter Mathias, state president, AKFBOA. Compounding the woes of fishers, the boat operators in the West Coast are staring at a 61-day trawling ban which will kick in on June 1. Mathias said the issue of contaminated fish being smuggled in from other states can be checked if the state allows enough catch. "We are getting fish consignments from outside due to shortage of fish in the market. Small boats alone cannot meet the demand, he said. But the fisheries department plans to address the situation by relaxing norms for traditional fishers. Ever since the government imposed restrictions, the boats have been anchored off the harbour in Kollam, Ernakulam and Kozhikode. In Kollam, which has the largest number of boats in the state, most of the boats can be found on the Eastern side of the Neendakara bridge. Around 1,000 boats have been anchored along the eight km stretch from Neendakara to Thoppilkadavu on the Ashtamudi lake. There are 4,000 large mechanised boats while small boats operated by traditional fishermen number 40,000.

Kerala: Fishing by small boats to be permitted

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishing-by-small-boats-to-be-permitted/article31383342.ece

"As part of the partial relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions from April 20, small boats will be permitted to venture into the sea, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma has said. Boats with engine capacity of upto 20 HP and length below 32 feet would be allowed to resume fishing in the first phase, she said at a press meet here on Sunday. With this Neendakara and Shaktikulangara harbours would be functional, said the Minister after attending the Harbour Management Committee meeting at Kollam Collectorate. Auctions will not be held and the price will be decided by the society. All the boats that will be venturing into the sea are instructed to register with the Fisheries Department and all the vehicles arriving at the harbour to buy fish also require registration. "Special provision will be arranged for women vendors to get fish and all amenities will be provided to carry out activities related to fishing. But following the directions and maintaining social distancing will be mandatory, she said. District Collector B.Abdul Nasar, Fisheries Deputy Director P.Geethakumari, ACP A.Pradeep Kumar and Matsyafed district manager Manirajan Paillai were also present on the occasion

Goa and Kerala: Fishermen crossing into Karnataka waters, violating ban'

https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=698376

"There is ban on deep sea fishing in Karnataka due to the coronavirus pandemic lockdown. However, it has come to light that fishermen from Goa are engaging in deep sea fishing in the northern territorial waters of Karnataka. In addition, it has been alleged that fishermen from Kerala have also been fishing on the southern territorial water area of Karnataka. The fishermen of Karnataka are questioning the administration whether the acts of Goa and Kerala fishermen amount to violation of lockdown rules or not. In Karnataka, only traditional fishing is allowed as of now. However, fishermen from Goa are carrying out light fishing in areas of Gangolli in the taluk for the four or five days during the night, it is alleged. It is also learnt that from the south, fishermen of Kerala are also violating the territorial water boundary and entering the waters of Karnataka. Mohan Karwar, president of Karwar Purse Seine fishermen's association says, ""Deep sea fishing is allowed in the state of Goa. I have information about Goa fishermen carrying out banned light fishing in the territorial waters of Karnataka for the past four or five days."" Ramesh Kundar, president of Gangolli Purse Seine fishermen's cooperative society questioned the authority saying, ""We are aware that the fishermen from Goa and Kerala are entering into territorial waters of Karnataka. Do they not have the restriction that is put on us?"" Responding to the issue, R Chethan, SP, Udupi district coastal protection police force said, ""We do not have any information of fishermen from Goa and Kerala carrying out fishing in waters of Karnataka. If our fishermen or any other person has information in this regard, they can pass on the same to us. We will investigate the matter. We have nine coastal protection force police stations at Mangaluru, Hejamadi, Malpe, Gangolli, Bhatkal, Honnavar, Kumta, Belekeri and Karwar in the three districts of Udupi, Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada. Patrolling is carried out everyday in all the places."" Checkposts have been opened at inter-district and inter-state borders. People are allowed only if it is really needed, he said.

Kerala: Seafood Industry Facing Problems Irrespective of Lockdown Ease Guidelines

https://krishijagran.com/animal-husbandry/kerala-seafood-industry-facing-problems-irrespective-of-lockdown-ease-guidelines/

"The All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has requested the Centre to be lenient on implementing the trawling ban this year, in view of the surging seafood demand in the post-Covid days. The ban on the East Coast comes into effect from April 15. But the current lockdown in Tamil Nadu would come as a blessing for the fishermen in that region to recoup their business once the restrictions are over, he said, adding that they would, in all probabilities, enter into Kerala's coastal waters for poaching, leaving the fishing community here to remain mute spectators. Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, General Secretary of All Kerala Fishing Boat

Operators Association, noted that each boat requires an initial investment of??2.5 lakh to start operations and it would be difficult to raise this amount in this distressing period. The Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines issued recently to revive fishing operations in the country has not brought any cheer to the crisis-hit seafood industry, particularly in Kerala, as the sector is facing issues such as closing down of shrimp peeling centres, and raw material shortage, etc. There are about 400 peeling units across the coastal Ernakulam district that employ about 50,000 workers, mostly women. Social distancing norms have forced companies to close down these units.

So far, the authorities have not given any exemption to these units, despite lifting curbs in various activities in the fishing sector, said Alex K Ninan, Kerala Region, President of Seafood Exporters Association of India. Several ancillary units depending on the sector, such as carton manufacturing, polythene suppliers, chemical manufacturers, etc are also not operating, as informed to the media. Satyanarain Lakkaraju, former president of All India Shrimp Hatcheries Association, also had his view point that it is easy to announce any decision on paper, but will be hard to implement it on the ground. The aquaculture sector is at a standstill in Andhra Pradesh in the absence of workers. Any decision to resume farming operations can be taken only after the lockdown period, he added. The immediate requirement, Ninan said, is allowing fishing boats to operate as there is a total ban on trawling activities. Fishing boats can fetch good yields as it is the season for smaller size shrimps, squids, cuttlefish, Baigai (sea snails), etc. He also pointed out that the ensuing 45-day monsoon trawling ban on the West Coast from June 15 will make things worse.

The request of boat operators to call off the trawling ban this year, considering the present fishing holidays in the lockdown period, has been turned down. Even if boat owners are preparing to start operations, they will have limited time before the ban comes into effect, he said. Elias Sait, Secretary General, Seafood Exporters Association of India, said there are several ground-level issues that need to be addressed. On the one hand, there are movement restrictions for cargo and on the other, the sector is facing a labour shortage, by about 20-30 percent. If the government takes positive steps, the sector would able to cope up with the situation. The market is now unsteady due to the slowdown and is likely to be stable by the end of May. The delay in getting lab reports, closing down of Export Inspection Agency offices, courier service companies to despatch shipping documents overseas, etc are some hurdles. “We are also seeking the government to give approvals from NABH-accredited private labs for seafood export consignments, he said. Since the export market was down, it would be ideal to extend the trawling ban period both in the East and West Coast, which would help to replenish the stock, said Ganesh Nakhawa, Chairman, West Coast Processing Fishing Welfare Association. The easing of fishing restrictions comes at the most inappropriate time when the labourers have left following the lockdown and there was no transport available for the

movement of the catch.

Kerala: Covid-19 outbreak: Call for policy to aid fisheries sector

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/call-for-policy-to-aid-fisheries-sector/articleshow/75187160.cms

"There is a need for a strong policy to support the fisheries sector including assistance to fisher folks whose livelihood has been seriously affected due to the global outbreak Covid-19. The export and domestic marketing of fish has been severely affected, said a report that was submitted by the Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT) to the Union government. The report, which looks first-hand at the impact of the 21-day lockdown on the fisheries sector, calls for revival of the domestic fish supply chain while adhering to the mandated health and sanitation norms. Online delivery of fish and its related products should be promoted in the context of livelihood security of fishers and local fish vendors as well as nutritional security of consumers. “Fisheries sector provide livelihood to around 16 million people apart from its contribution to food and nutritional security and foreign exchange earning potential. In 2018-19, Indian marine products exports provided 6.7 billion US dollars. Reduced demand due to spread of the disease in major export destinations like USA, China and EU has started trickling down to the ground level impacting the livelihood of many working in seafood processing and fishing related activities. Though there is an increase in demand for dry fish, drying units are unable to materialise the opportunity fully due to the difficulty in sourcing the raw material, said C N Ravishankar, director, CIFT. The report recommended that all stakeholders in the fish value chain are to be encouraged to follow the guidelines issued by the government and health workers strictly. The social security protection, including public distribution system, to the affected fishermen, to be enhanced.

Kerala: Fisherwomen demand fair treatment from police

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/17/fisherwomen-demand-fair-treatment-from-police-2131166.html

"Even as fruit and vegetable sellers have easy access to markets, small-scale fish vendors continued to be denied entry. The fish workers maintain that there are no clear-cut instructions whether the small-scale fish vendors can do business or not, even though they fall under essential services. This has led to a situation when the women would be driven away by police from markets. Meanwhile, many large-scale vendors are doing business without hindrance. Fisherwomen from Adimalathura and Pulluvila are allowed to sell fish outside the market and they follow social distancing too. Aat some point the crowd gets bigger and the police will be driving the customers and the sellers away, before they could even get the price of the fish they sold. “The police manage crowds at bank and at some shops, yet when it comes to

fisherwomen, the authorities have double standards. They are paving way for large-scale vendors to sell rotten fish brought from other states.

The government also needs to specify the restrictions when it comes to fishing community. As far as we know, only the fishing auction is banned as of now as it creates larger crowds. The women who carry fish on their heads to the markets near the coast are mostly the breadwinner of their families. They don't have pensions and even for the ones who do have pension, the money will not be enough to make both ends meet, said T Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers Forum. The plight of woman fisher sellers is the same in Pettah, Palayam and Poovar. “We travel kilometres on foot to sell the fish. We don't go from house to house anymore because of the restrictions. Our family will be hungry if we cannot sell the fish we buy after loaning money from the agents. We need immediate help from the authorities, said a fisherwoman.

Kerala: Nod to revive fishing operations fails to cheer seafood sector

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/nod-to-revive-fishing-operations-fails-to-cheer-seafood-sector/article31346766.ece

"The Centre's nod to revive fishing operations in the country has not brought any cheer to the crisis-hit seafood industry, particularly in Kerala, as the sector is facing issues such as closing down of shrimp peeling centres, and raw material shortage, etc. There are about 400 peeling units across the coastal Ernakulam district that employ about 50,000 workers, mostly women. Social distancing norms have forced companies to close down these units. So far, the authorities have not given any exemption to these units, despite lifting curbs in various activities in the fishing sector, said Alex K Ninan, President of Seafood Exporters Association of India (Kerala Region). Several ancillary units depending on the sector, such as carton manufacturing, polythene suppliers, chemical manufacturers, etc are also not operating, he told BusinessLine. According to Satyanarain Lakkaraju, former president of All India Shrimp Hatcheries Association, it is easy to announce any decision on paper, but will be hard to implement it on the ground. The aquaculture sector is at a standstill in Andhra Pradesh in the absence of workers. Any decision to resume farming operations can be taken only after the lockdown period, he added. Trawling ban The immediate requirement, Ninan said, is allowing fishing boats to operate as there is a total ban on trawling activities.

Fishing boats can fetch good yields as it is the season for smaller size shrimps, squids, cuttlefish, Baigai (sea snails), etc. He also pointed out that the ensuing 45-day monsoon trawling ban on the West Coast from June 15 will make things worse. The request of boat operators to call off the trawling ban this year, considering the present fishing holidays in the

lockdown period, has been turned down. Even if boat owners are preparing to start operations, they will have limited time before the ban comes into effect, he said. Elias Sait, Secretary General, Seafood Exporters Association of India, said there are several ground-level issues that need to be addressed. On the one hand, there are movement restrictions for cargo and on the other, the sector is facing a labour shortage, by about 20-30 per cent. If the government takes positive steps, the sector would able to cope up with the situation. Exports in limbo The market is now unsteady due to the slowdown and is likely to be stable by the end of May. The delay in getting lab reports, closing down of Export Inspection Agency offices, courier service companies to despatch shipping documents overseas, etc are some hurdles. “We are also seeking the government to give approvals from NABH-accredited private labs for seafood export consignments, he said.

Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal, general secretary of All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, noted that each boat requires an initial investment of ?2.5 lakh to start operations and it would be difficult to raise this amount in this distressing period. The Association has requested the Centre to be lenient on implementing the trawling ban this year, in view of the surging seafood demand in the post-Covid days. The ban on the East Coast comes into effect from April 15. But the current lockdown in Tamil Nadu would come as a blessing for the fishermen in that region to recoup their business once the restrictions are over, he said, adding that they would, in all probabilities, enter into Kerala's coastal waters for poaching, leaving the fishing community here to remain mute spectators. The easing of fishing restrictions comes at the most inappropriate time when the labourers have left following the lockdown and there was no transport available for the movement of the catch. Since the export market was down, it would be ideal to extend the trawling ban period both in the East and West Coast, which would help to replenish the stock, said Ganesh Nakhawa, Chairman, West Coast Processing Fishing Welfare Association.

Kerala: Fish abounds, but safety is of concern

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fish-abounds-but-safety-is-of-concern/article31303229.ece

"With Easter around the corner, tonnes of stale fish are making their way to Kerala from neighbouring States. Despite a ban on deep-sea fishing, huge fish are aplenty in the market. But the large-scale seizure of stale fish across the State in the last few days raises concerns on the quality of fish available now. “Fish from nearby States are found to contain higher quantity of arsenic residue, which may cause hepatic and intestinal cancers, says T.P. Sethumadhavan, former director, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU). Checking fish gills, the old method to find out how fresh the fish is, still holds good, says B. Sunil, head, KVASU Meat Technology Centre, Mannuthy. “In whole fish, the gills are bright red or pink.

Gills should not be dry or slimy. They could be slightly wet. In fresh fish, the eyes are shiny, clear and bulging. Sunken or wrinkled eyes means the fish is old. The body should be firm and the skin, glowing. Scales should be tightly attached. Loose scales, which tend to slough off, indicate staleness, he says. Fresh fish give off only mild fishy smell. Fish with a pungent smell, which is due to the release of a compound in stale fish called trimethylamine, should be avoided. Consumers need to look for abnormalities in colour, texture, and surface sliminess, Dr. Sunil adds.

There are risks associated with bacterial or viral contamination, naturally occurring toxins, and chemical contaminants in fish. The problem is grave when fish is stored in unhygienic conditions under nonideal temperature. Pathogens and chemical contaminants like formalin are of prime concern. “While handing infected fish, people too can get infected through abrasions or cuts in their skin. KVASU has mapped Listeria (an infection caused by eating food contaminated with bacterium Listeria monocytogenes) in animals, food, and environment in Kerala, Dr. Sunil says. Tips for customers A few tips for customers: Keep seafood refrigerated below 4°C until ready to use, separate cooked and raw seafood, wash utensils before using to avoid cross-contamination, wash hands before and after handling any raw or cooked food, cook seafood thoroughly to an internal temperature of 65°C and keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

Kerala Covid-19 response model for emulation

https://www.ipsnews.net/2020/04/kerala-covid-19-response-model-emulation/

"Within weeks, the Covid-19 epidemic was classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an epidemic of international significance, triggering a pre-agreed WHO response. By the end of the first week of April, more than 1.3 million people had been confirmed as infected, with over 65,000 deaths across the world. Many governments of developing, especially poor countries are unsure what to do, fearing the likely economic consequences of the ‘lockdowns' increasingly adopted by Western economies. Indeed, lockdowns may shut down businesses relying on daily turnover and eliminate incomes for daily rated workers. Meanwhile, most East Asian and some other governments have acted early to trace, test, isolate and treat the infected without lockdowns. Yet, most measures recommended have been criticized as beyond the means of the most vulnerable societies and populations. Early measures have required ‘physical distancing' and other precautionary measures at work, at home and in the community, at relatively low cost. People also need to be prepared to live differently for a long time to come as part of a ‘new normal', at least until everyone can be effectively vaccinated. ‘All of government' approaches are urgently needed everywhere to provide effective leadership to ‘whole of society' efforts to contain the spread of viral infections. While this is no conventional war, only whole of society mobilization efforts can

help mitigate major economic disruption and damage.

This should not only involve public health and police authorities, typically those empowered by draconian lockdowns. But repressive measures are unlikely to secure needed public support for effective enforcement and implementation, and adoption of needed behavioural and cultural changes. Health authorities must provide publics with much better understanding of the threats faced and the rationale for policy responses to secure compliance. Public appreciation of the challenges involved is crucial for policy compliance and effective implementation. Kerala state in southwestern India, with a population of 35 million, has become "a model state in the fight against Covid-19. Its Left Front-led government was among the first to introduce precautionary state-wide measures against the novel coronavirus threat. Through appropriate and effective early actions, it has successfully slowed the spread of infection in the state, largely by promoting physical distancing and mainly sanitary precautionary, measures, and providing better protection for health staff well before the hugely disruptive and draconian lockdown imposed in India in late March. The Kerala state government invited religious leaders, local bodies and civil society organizations to participate in policy design and implementation, considering its specific socio-economic conditions, including urban slum environments. It has communicated effectively in different languages to educate all, including migrants, and to prevent stigmatization of those infected, even opposing the term 'social distancing', which has caste connotations, with 'physical distancing and social solidarity'. Despite Kerala's long-standing achievements in education, health and science, highly educated Keralans tend to migrate to work out of state, if not abroad, seeking more lucrative employment. The state was still recovering from the devastating floods and nipah virus epidemic of 2018 when tens of thousands began returning after losing jobs in the Middle East. Kerala is also the destination for a large number of Indian internal migrants.

With the nationwide lockdown, non-residents, equivalent to almost 5% of Kerala's population, have returned, causing a surge of new infections. Such unusually high movements of people have made the state more vulnerable. Despite some controversy, the state appears to have handled the migrant issue very well, especially compared to other state governments and the central government. There has also been a close connection between Kerala and Wuhan, a popular educational hub offering affordable quality medical and other courses; the first three positive Covid-19 cases detected in India involved returned university students in Wuhan. The state health department promptly went into action, setting up a coordination centre on 26 January. Recognizing there was no time to be lost, the Kerala state government set up mechanisms to identify, test, isolate and treat those infected, quickly earning an excellent reputation. Some key features of Kerala's response, undertaken by a government with very limited fiscal resources, are hence instructive. *All-of-government approach: involving a range of relevant state government ministries and agencies to design measures to improve consistency, coordination and communication, and to avoid confusion. *Whole-of-society

approach: wide community consultations, including experts, to find the most locally appropriate modes of limiting infections, along with means to monitor and enforce them. *Social mobilization: communities were provided essential epidemiological information to understand the threat and related issues, ensure compliance with prescribed precautionary measures, and avoid panic. *No one left behind: adequate supply of essential commodities, particularly food and medicines, has been ensured, especially to protect the most vulnerable sections of society. To make things worse, Kerala has been discriminated against by the central government's disaster relief fund on specious grounds.

The largely agricultural state has modest fiscal resources of its own as state governments in India have limited fiscal rights and resources. The Kerala government has set up 18 committees and holds daily evening meetings to evaluate the situation, issuing media updates about those quarantined, tested and hospitalized . At these meetings, the state Health Minister and Chief Minister calmly explain what is going on, including what the government is doing. They thus provide credible leadership on the difficult issues involved, securing strong public participation for its mass campaign of containment. Kerala's approach has proven less disruptive, less costly and more effective than most others. After recording its first COVID-19 case on January 30, its infection and death rates have been kept relatively low despite much more tracing and testing.

Kerala: Ashtamudi clam gets a breather as MSC extends assessment timeline

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/ashtamudi-clam-gets-a-breather-as-msc-extends-assessment-timelines/articleshow/75048146.cms

"The Marine stewardship council has offered fisheries sector a six-month extensions on the usual timelines for assessments and certifications. It is the first time in the MSC's 22-year history such a step has been taken, reflecting the enormous challenges the pandemic is posing to the global seafood industry. “The coronavirus pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge to us all. We are aware of the significant impact the crisis is having on businesses, many of which are not only having to change their operations but are fighting to survive. To support everyone in the sustainable seafood industry we are pausing some of our certification processes, said Ranjit Suseelan, India representative, MSC. The only MSC certified fisheries in the country is the Ashtamudi Lake short-neck clam. “This fishery is under the recertification process since it completed five years in November 2019, said Sunil Mohammed, principal scientist-CMFRI and member of the technical advisory doard of MSC. He said that the MSC has already granted extension in time because of the floods in 2018 and 2019 which did affect the stock. “The current extension of 6 months offered by MSC would definitely help in allowing time for rebuilding of the stock and in assuring funding arrangements. There are 12 other fisheries in India which are in the process of attaining MSC certification through fishery

improvement projects (FIP).

These fisheries have actions to be completed every quarter and an extension would definitely help, Sunil Mohammed added. The measures were agreed by the Board of Trustees and are effective from March 27, 2020. The decision means timelines for fisheries assessments, including audits, delivery on conditions and certifications will receive an automatic six-month extension. However, fishery partners who wish to go ahead with remote audits and existing timelines, can do so if this is feasible and agreed with conformity assessment bodies. However, for supply chain businesses with and MSC chain of custody certificates, audits can still be conducted remotely. But if this is not possible due to impact of Covid-19, then a six-month extension can be requested. This latest move is in response to the massive disruption facing the industry. It builds on the MSCs previous decision that fisheries and chain of custody certificate holders can be audited remotely as travel restrictions and public health advice had made it increasingly difficult to carry out site visits.

Kerala Government's Report of the expert committee on strategy for easing lockdown restrictions is available online

https://www.docdroid.net/E3DfTeD/covid-lockdown-reversal-strategy-report-submitted-to-hon-cm-pdf

"The COVID pandemic is an unprecedented public health crisis, unmatched in recent history. While there have been pandemics which have ravaged the globe and has resulted in the deaths of several millions, a pandemic of this spread, proportion and intensity is the first of its kind in a highly interconnected and globalised world. The pandemic has spread to 208 countries as on April 5, 2020. Already over 1.22 million people have been infected and the death toll has crossed 65,000. Globally a downward trend is nowhere in evidence, even though signs of hope are evident are evident in some countries. Many locations also provide us with evidence of what works. India –current status: In India alone, over 3550 people have been infected and the death toll has crossed 95. The charts below showing the total number of corona infections and deaths in India (source www.worldometers.info). Some experts have argued that given the low level of testing in India the numbers may have been undercounted. Kerala –current status: As on 5th April 2020, 256 people have been infected by the virus and are under treatment. The table below shows the district wise breakup of the persons under surveillance in hospitals as well as homes in different parts of the State. Thanks to the proactive action by the state government new, cases have shown a declining trend in recent days. The expert committee report is available at: https://www.docdroid.net/E3DfTeD/covid-lockdown-reversal-strategy-report-submitted-to-hon-cm-pdf

Lockdown: Church in Kerala donates money meant for renovation to help fishermen

community

https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=694339

"From individuals to organizations stepping out to help people in need during this lockdown, a church in Alappuzha in the south Indian state of Kerala decided to donate money to the fishermen community who were worst affected. Technically, the money was being collected for the church renovation. Fr Thomas, a priest of the church said, ""There are 530 families here and with the money collected for church renovation I will be able to support each family with Rs 500. I thought at this time supporting them is more important than renovating the church."" Solomon, a fisherman said that they were solely surviving on the free ration provided by the government since the lockdown was imposed."Since last month we have no work and the lockdown has made the situation difficult for us. At this time getting Rs 500 is like getting Rs 5 lac,"" said another fisherman Yousheph, indicating the sufferings of the families without work. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Wednesday asserted that India has 5,194 cases with 4,643 cases reported to be active while 401 people have either recovered or discharged. In the last 24 hours, the ministry reported 10 new deaths taking the death toll to 149.

Kerala: Tribute: A fishing village in Kerala mourns Italian nurse Lauretta Farina of Bergamo

https://english.manoramaonline.com/news/kerala/2020/04/07/marianad-fishing-village-italian-nurse-lauretta-farina-bergamo.html

"Did you know that there is a small fishing village called Marianad, in Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, which owes a lot of its history to a public health nurse from Bergamo – the epicentre of the novel coronavirus outbreak in Italy? This nurse, Lauretta Farina, 86, passed away on March 12, 2020, in a retirement home in Bergamo. History of Marianad Bishop Peter Bernard Pereira, head of the Latin Catholic church in Trivandrum was a great visionary of socio-economic development practice. In 1960, he started the Trivandrum Social Service Society (TSSS) with the wish to run it on professional lines. The Bishop sought advice from an American economist, a Brazilian architect and a Kerala government official familiar with cooperatives. He visited Europe to scout for funds and volunteers who could undertake planned activities which would help to uplift the economic and social development conditions of the thousands of fisherfolk in his diocese.

Responding to the Bishop's call, a team of three women, from three countries, belonging to an international professional women's volunteer group arrived in Trivandrum in 1962. Lauretta Farina, then 28, was one of them. Marianad (the land of Mary) was a created village. TSSS bought land at a coastal tract called Allilathura (the coast with no people) and built 56

welldesigned, low-cost houses as part of a housing cooperative. Fishers from the coastal villages in Trivandrum were requested to come and stay there. Only the really poorest, who had nothing to lose, ventured to take the challenge. The Bishop, based on his learning from past failures to help his community, gave the organisers three radical principles to follow. Do not provide anything free. Try to assess the real needs of the people, not their wants. Always involve the people in the decision making about interventions that affect their lives. Initial years Lauretta and her colleagues facilitated the starting of a crèche, a nursery school, a small health clinic, a group savings scheme, a club of young girls learning crafts, an art and sports club, a mahila samajam (women's collective), and finally a fishermen's cooperative - all evolving organically. The basic aim behind the activities was to initiate an informal educational process to encourage changes, to build awareness and inspire self-confidence. Hence, much time was spent in trying to make the people understand what was going on in their midst, encourage their involvement and help them to shoulder responsibility. During this time the men, who were highly skilled in fishing, and their women, with a good sense of market opportunities, slowly constituted their fishing and fish selling activities. 'Chechi' of Marianad In Marianad, Lauretta was known as Chechi (elder sister) by old and young.

She picked up Malayalam quickly, though she spoke it with the slang of the fishing community. She adopted the saree and wore it elegantly. Her influence on the community was proverbial. In the dead of night, she would go to stop drunken brawls between fishermen and their families. In the dark, she would shine the torch onto her face and call out the man by name. The sound and sight of Chechi was enough to turn the violent man into an apologetic timid child! She commanded respect by her very presence. The next morning, she would go back to the family and talk to them with love and concern and admonish the man for his actions. But she always left with a smile and a loving touch. A skilled organiser In the early 1970s the fishers organised into a cooperative, which was formed after considerable struggles between them and the village merchant-money lender. They wanted the freedom to sell their fish and not be bonded to him. Lauretta, along with her colleagues – who were by then all Indians – stood by the demands of the fishers and helped them to organise the Marianad Malsya Ulpadaka Cooperative Society (Marianad MUCS) under the aegis of the Kerala government. Lauretta was a good organiser. She was very methodical and systematic. She realised that methods are not universal, but can vary according to a person's experiential knowledge and was open to the great knowledge of the fishers, whowere illiterate.

Working in a community, which had a low self-esteem and also shunned by the larger society, Lauretta asserted that a person's dignity resulted from both the person's own assertions and actions, as well as the perception of others. Many fishermen would come to the cooperative office straight from the seashore – often bare-bodied with their chests exposed. She used to insist that no fishermen should enter their cooperative office without being properly dressed. Initially there was resistance. But soon there was realisation among the fishermen how such

behaviour was important both for their own collective pride and dignity and the way others in society thought about and valued them. Lauretta had a caring professionalism in her dealings with the men and women of the fishing community. She emphasised the need to be understanding and kind, but yet firm and fair in dealing with all people, irrespective of their position in society.. Such values and the full participation of the fishers in the management of their cooperative made it one of the best functioning in Kerala. The strong resolve of the fishers to resist all opposition to their organisational efforts and their excellent cooperation led to the Marianad MUCS being recognised in the official Economic Review 1977 of the Government of Kerala as "an eye-opener to the fishermen cooperatives in Kerala.

Dedicated leadership and the felt need of the fishermen for united action against the exploitation by the middlemen could be reckoned as the contributory factors for the dynamic outlook of Marianad. In 1985, the Kerala government wound-up all MUCS cooperatives and created the Matsyafed which was modelled along the basic lines of the Marianad MUCS. Marianad, with over 1,500 families now, has two well-functioning Matsyafed cooperatives. Lauretta leaves Marianad Lauretta left Marianad in 1977 after playing a lead role in creating the new village of Marianad from the land with no people. She went back to take care of her invalid father. She also nursed her ailing mother and Alzheimer-stricken sister in her home town of Caravaggio in Bergamo Province. Later, when some of her earlier colleagues took the initiative to organise the first international conference of fishers and their supporters in Rome, they visited her in Bergamo. She put them in touch with some members of the Communist-led municipality of Rome who could probably help with the arrangements. It was through these contacts that the conference, held in 1984, was 'sponsored' by the municipality and permission was granted to have an international cultural event by the fishers at the world-famous Piazza Navona. During the conference, which she had attended, Lauretta got the satisfaction to see how the Marianad experiment became an important basis for the creation of a big international network of fishers and their supporters. Lauretta visited Marianad again once, 25 years later, in 1992 to the great joy of the community.

Marianad is now one of the biggest, prosperous and well organised fishing villages of Kerala. The Matsyafed Cooperatives now functioning in the village received the President's award for the best primary fishery cooperative in India on two occasions. In 2015, Lauretta was taken to a retirement home in the town of Treviglio in Bergamo in an advanced state of dementia. On March 12, 2020, some of us who worked closely with Lauretta were together for dinner. It was 9:30pm. Listening to the news about the rapid spread of COVID-19 virus in Bergamo, we wondered whether there was any news of Lauretta. At about the same time, in that retirement home, Lauretta left us and joined her creator. The epitaph on her coffin read: Vi ho amati tutti – uno ad uno. Yes, she loved us all – each one of us in a very special way

Kerala: Increase in flow of stale fish from other States

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/increase-in-flow-of-stale-fish-from-other-states/article31283460.ece

"It was the vigilant public who alerted authorities about an unfamiliar truck parked on a pocket road at Neendakara. It carried some 4,000 kg of tuna and after the initial denial, the crew of the truck confessed to the police that it was nearly one month old. It was just one of the many consignments seized by the police, Fisheries and Food Safety Departments in the past four days from Kollam, the total quantity over a whopping 20,000 kg. Various departments have intensified vigil, conducting daily inspections under Operation Sagar Rani to check inflow of stale fish. Cashing in on shortage "With majority of fishing boats idling, there has been a severe shortage of fish for the past 10 days and some consider it an opportunity to dispose of old stock. These consignments are mainly from pre-lockdown days and they all reach Kerala from other States by road, says Circle Inspector S. Sherif. "When the 21-day lockdown came into effect, several trawlers were stranded in the sea, many of them returning after long days with their catch. In order to evade strict regulations, including mandatory quarantine, many boats decided to remain in the sea around 12 nautical miles where the territorial waters end. But since they ventured into the sea some three to four weeks before lockdown, it was not possible to keep the catch for a long time, says Francis, fisher.

At first some boats tried to sell the catch using small carrier boats that ferried the fish to the local harbour. "When Fisheries Department started seizing such boats in Kerala, they went to places such as Muttom in Tamil Nadu to unload the catch. Since there is no restriction to transport fish now, they are bringing it to Kerala by road since our State is their biggest market, he adds. Boats seized The Fisheries Department has so far seized four boats in Kollam and marine enforcement officials are supervising the activities in harbours to ensure that there are no violations. "One of the boats had quality catch and we helped to market it through Matsyafed. The boats we seized were disinfected with the help of Fire and Safety officials and are currently docked at Neendakara. A total of 54 crew members, including those from other States, have been quarantined in Kollam, says Fisheries Deputy Director P. Geethakumari.

Kerala: Decayed and adulterated fish enter market as fishing sector takes a hit

https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/decayed-and-adulterated-fish-enter-kerala-market-fishing-sector-takes-hit-122040

"Fish availability in the state has been almost negligible ever since the COVID-19

lockdown began in the state. Fishermen remained off sea, and have neither been catching nor selling fish as it may draw huge gatherings. But in the absence of these regular fishermen, new faces selling fish on the roadside have become a common sight in many places. Trucks carrying fish were also seen on the roads.

However, there were soon complaints that fish mixed with formalin and decayed fish were being sold in the state, following which the state Food Safety Department and the Health Department decided to revive 'Operation Sagar Rani', a 2018 campaign against the mixing of chemical substances in fish. For instance, on Sunday, the police seized more than 2,200 kilograms of decayed fish from Attingal in Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. These were brought from Thengapattinam of Tamil Nadu to be sold in Kerala. A month-old shark and other fish infested with maggots were seized from trucks during a vehicle check. Another 1,200 kilograms of fish were seized from Alappuzha district on Sunday. Meanwhile, in Aluva of Ernakulam district, a pregnant cat died allegedly after eating an adulterated fish. Shajir, a resident of Aluva, claimed that he bought the fish from the market and gave it to his cat. According to him, the cat started shivering and died 45 minutes later. He alleged that fish had some poison in it. Fishermen in limbo On April 4, the state Fisheries Department allowed the traditional fishermen to return to fishing while following certain regulations.

However, many were reluctant to venture into the sea as bidding is not allowed, crowds are not allowed in harbours or markets, and ice plants are not operational. Only a few small boats with two or three fishermen in one boat ventured out. Fishermen also fear that there are risks of spread of coronavirus if fishing continues, even though precautions are taken. ""Even before the restrictions were put in place, we had decided not to go fishing until March 31. Though the Fisheries Minister declared that traditional fishermen are allowed to go fishing in small boats, we found that too risky. Besides, if we can catch more fish, it can also attract a huge crowd, which is not allowed at the time of social distancing, said Charles George, president of the Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikyavedi (TUCI). TUCI approached the Chief Minister with a petition, demanding that traditional fishermen be provided with at least Rs 5,000 a month as relief aid. In its letter to J Mercykutty Amma, the Fisheries Minister, the National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) pointed out that the community was totally forgotten at the time of lockdown."The small-scale fish workers across are yet to receive financial assistance. Similarly, fish workers and daily wage labourers in the motorised and mechanised sectors are yet to receive support, and many of them are stranded at sea, or in harbours in cramped conditions. Small and traditional boat owners are yet to receive notifications regarding a financial aid package to cover the losses on account of the lockdown,"" read the letter from NFF, a federation of state-level small and traditional fish workers' unions of India.

Kerala: Fishers lock horns over fishing ban

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-lock-horns-over-fishing-ban/article31264608.ece

"Mechanised trawlers want the ban to be lifted to cater to huge export demand. The fishers in traditional and mechanised sectors have locked horns over the annual fishing ban that begins in the East Coast States on April 15. A proposal to merge the lockdown days with the ban period, allowing mechanised vessels to resume operations three weeks early, has not gone down well with traditional fishers who believe it will wreck the marine ecosystem. Meanwhile, boat owners from the State, one of the West Coast States where the trawl ban comes into effect from June 1, have approached the Centre to call off the ban as a one-time measure to revive the pandemic-hit seafood industry. Stagnant since January "The mechanised sector became nearly stagnant from January due to the dip in exports and we had completely stopped operations after the lockdown. During the past three months there was minimal activity and we want the authorities the to call off the ban this year considering this, says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association. The mechanised sector is keen on getting the ban lifted since they anticipate enormous export demand as overseas cargo movement improves. "Trawlers mainly cater to the export industry and a lot of others, including processors, ice plants, peeling units and vendors are dependent on us.

If the ban is not lifted, we will lose a golden chance to revive our country's economy and we feel banning trawlers immediately after the COVID-19 crisis will cause irreparable damage to the industry, Mr. Mathias said. He adds that around 2.5 lakh vessels across India will have to stay idle during the ban period. Traditional fishers' view According to traditional fishers, changing the dates will beat the purpose of the ban that was introduced to conserve the fishery resources and protect the habitat during the spawning season. "It is the time during which the marine stock gets replenished and blocking it will affect the sector in long-term. According to the proposal, the ban period for the East Coast should be considered to have begun from March 24 which is unacceptable from the environmental perspective. Just like all other sectors, the lockdown has affected the entire population engaged in fishing and allied activities. Lifting the ban early or cancelling it altogether will create serious repercussions since it's not environmentally sustainable, says T.Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers' Forum. The lockdown has also affected a large section of traditional fishers who could not venture into the sea since several restrictions were in place. "The lockdown has hit all stakeholders in the sector uniformly. So instead of protecting the short-term interests of mechanised sector, we should think about the future. To preserve the marine environment and ensure sustainability it's very important to maintain the ban in both coasts, he adds.

Kerala: Allows fishing in small boats from April 4, catch to be sold without drawing

crowds

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/apr/02/kerala-allows-fishing-in-small-boats-from-april-4-catch-to-be-sold-without-drawing-crowds-2124788.html

"The government has allowed fishermen to carry out restricted fishing activities from April 4 to help the community and ensure the availability of fish. The sale of fish would be held strictly in accordance with the social distancing practiced during the lockdown. "Only traditional fishermen are allowed to go for fishing. The catch they bring will have to be sold without creating crowds, said fisheries minister J Mercykutty Amma. Trawlers and fishers in Kasaragod are banned from fishing. It is the third time that the government is issuing the order to ensure compliance with the restrictions imposed in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown. The government first allowed fishing on March 27. The order was revoked and reissued on March 30. "We had the permission to allow fishing from the Chief Minister. But the orders had to be reissued with the approval of the COVID monitoring cell chaired by the Chief Secretary, said an officer. The fishing community gave a lukewarm response to the previous orders as they were worried about their safety and the restriction on selling. The new order said that the auction has to be held at harbours and select landing centres in the state. There would not be an open auction. But the price would be predetermined based on the average price of each fish for a week's time. The government is also planning to introduce a mobile app for buyers to make the bid before the boat reaches the coast.

Kerala: Now, trawling ban stares in the face of lockdown-battered fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/now-trawling-ban-stares-in-the-face-of-lockdown-battered-fishers/article31241625.ece

"Fishermen and their families across the State are having a tough time with the steep decline in revenue following the lockdown and the delay in announcing a relief package by the Union and State governments. Now, with the Centre deciding to implement trawling ban on June 1, they are apprehensive that the two-month ban period may further aggravate their situation. The majority of fishing harbours in Kerala are non-functional now with the restrictions imposed on auctioning and sales. Only a small group of traditional fishermen now venture out as they have no other options for survival. Welfare package Leaders of fishermen organisations say an interim welfare package is therefore a basic need for supporting the community to overcome the longest lean season. Fishermen Thozhilali Congress vice-president K. Rajan said the State government's promises of a welfare package for fishers were yet to be realised. "As usual, it will not be reaching the majority of eligible workers who work at the bottom of the traditional sector. People's representatives too are ignoring their plight now, he said. Hundreds of migrant labourers employed in the sector were now staying back in the boats in the wake of the COVID-19 scare. As the government was unable to give them

accommodation in cities, these workers were forced to remain in boats till the end of the lockdown, union leaders said. Traditional fishers hit "The fish resources are on the decline. Unlike trawler boat owners, small-scale traditional fishers are the worst-hit and they deserve better support from the government, said Abdul Razik, secretary of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. "In the present situation, the State government should try to find out deserving fishermen in each district and provide them reasonable benefits, he said. As per the Fisheries Department, there are 11.11 lakh fishermen in Kerala, which include 8.22 lakh in the marine sector.

Kerala: Church extends helping hand to fisherfolk

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/church-extends-helping-hand-to-fisherfolk/articleshow/74955311.cms

"In the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak and discussions over ensuring a 'basic income' for all, a church at a rural fishing hamlet in the district has walked the talk. It has decided to distribute Rs 2,000 to all families under it who are in deep financial misery due to the lockdown. Our Lady of Assumption Church, Marianad, under the Thiruvananthapuram Latin Archdiocese will provide Rs 2,000 for 1,677 families under it. Church vicar Fr Jerard Dasan said that the families, majority of them fishermen, had decided to stay indoors as a precautionary measure to prevent spread of the pandemic. "Even before the state and Centre announced a lockdown, our fishermen had taken the precautionary measures as the area usually witnesses huge participation of outsiders for auction of fish. But as they are sitting jobless for a week and there is uncertainty over the upcoming days, we thought of ways to support them. Archbishop Soosa Pakiam had asked us to provide support to the poor, sick and widows. All we have is the contribution from the fishermen community, who always earmarked a portion of their revenue to the church. So now it is our turn to support them, said Jerald Dasan. The church asked its members to take a list of the number of families who need support. "We told them that if anyone does not need financial support, it could be utilized for others who are in dire need of money. Interestingly, 98 families gave statement that they don't need money. Rs 2,000 each will be distributed to 1,677 families from Friday, the vicar said. Fr Jerard Dasan said that a decision on continuing the support will be taken after Easter. "It happens on mutual confidence between the church and its members. We know that we will be there for each other if there is a need, he said.

Restricted fishing gets lukewarm response in Kerala, India

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/01/restricted-fishing-gets-lukewarm-response-2124111.html

"The restricted permission for fishing has failed to evoke much response among

traditional fishermen in the south Indian state of Kerala. Closing down of ice factories and transportation challenges amid the lockdown have forced many to stay on shore. However, those who returned from fishing in the district and Kollam were faced with enthusiastic retail buyers who came from far-off locations defying travel restrictions. "Only a couple of boats ventured into the sea from every fishing village. The current restrictions have led to a big dip in sales, said Jackson Pollayil, general secretary, Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF).The government allowed fishing, through an order issued on March 30, on the condition that there shouldn't be any crowding at landing centres. Instead of conducting a public auction, the price of the catch has to be predetermined by the fishing cooperative society in the locality along with officers of the fisheries department, stated the order. According to the fishermen, the confusion over fixing prices is a major disadvantage for them. "We were told to avoid fish landing centre to prevent crowding and to take the catch to fishing villages instead. However, we do not get enough business there, said Pollayil. There are 222 fishing villages in the state, of which 80 are in Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam. The reference price for purchase is determined based on last week's rate.

A Matsyafed officer said there was good demand for fish due to shortage. "The restrictions are reasonable. The government gave the permission to help the community, he said. Matsyafed has started selling fish in limited quantity through its outlets in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam from Tuesday. The outlet in Ernakulam is selling frozen fish to meet the demand. Leaders of the fishermen community have demanded the government to lift the restrictions on fishing. T Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers Forum, said the lockdown had affected the livelihood of fishers and it was creating social unrest in the community. Fishing villages in Maryanadu have decided to restrict the number of fishers venturing into the sea to one third of the total boat strength. The fisheries department has put 383 fishermen in Thiruvananthapuram and 13 in Kollam under quarantine after they returned from fishing during the lockdown period. The fisheries department has put 383 fishermen in Thiruvananthapuram and 13 in Kollam under quarantine after they returned from fishing during the lockdown period.

Kerala: Restricted fishing gets lukewarm response

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/apr/01/restricted-fishing-gets-lukewarm-response-2124111.html

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Kerala: Fish workers have appealed to the government to help open ice plants as well as to defer the survey for deciding on kerosene permits for fishing boats

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-urge-govt-to-lend-helping-hand/article31221317.ece

"Fish workers have appealed to the government to help open ice plants as well as to defer the survey for deciding on kerosene permits for fishing boats to late April or early May in view of the COVID-19 outbreak. An appeal to the government by the Swathanthra Matsya

Thozhilali Federation said confusion prevailed due to the absence of clear directions on fishing operations and catch of sale in the midst of a nation-wide lockdown. There were also differences of opinion among fishers regarding the sale of catch, especially as there were no police or fisheries personnel at most of the sales points. Normal fishing operations have been suspended in the wake of the lockdown. Only some gill net boats with up to seven fishermen and thermocol boats are operating. But, the sale of catch is a problem as there may be crowding. Ensuring the supervision of fisheries and police personnel at non-traditional sales points could help fishers sell their catch by turn. The traditional fish landing centres and harbours have been shut in view of the government-led action to contain the pandemic. Fishers also appealed to the government to ensure the availability of daily provisions along coastal areas. Most of the shops in coastal areas had run out of supplies, said the Federation spokesperson. The union of fishers has also said that the time to catch fish farmed in paddy fields along coastal areas should be extended to April 31.

Kerala Fish vendor disinfects entire locality, sets up portable hand washing unit!

https://www.thebetterindia.com/222143/kerala-coronavirus-covid19-hero-kanjirapally-fish-vendor-inspiring-ser106/

"In this period of crisis, many amongst us have tapped into their compassionate side and become good samaritans for those in need. But if you speak to anyone in Kerala's Kanjirappally village, they will tell you that Najeeb, a fish vendor and one of its residents, has always been one. A former bus driver, Najeeb returned to Kerala a few years back to take over his brother's fish business as he had fallen ill. Alongside all his work, he always made time to help his villagers whenever they needed any help–whether it was providing water to those experiencing a shortage, palliative care to elderly patients, or distributing food to the hungry. So, when he saw the number of COVID-19 patients escalating in the state, he immediately volunteered to help. "I knew I had to do my part. And when I heard that soap was the best way to tackle this problem, I came up with a plan, says Najeeb, who made a portable hand washing unit attaching a water tank and a set of taps to an auto. Along with this, he distributed liquid hand wash soap to people. "I went around almost the entire Kanjirappally town with this portable setup, so that people could understand the gravity of the situation and the importance of washing hands, he explains. Besides encouraging people to wash their hands and maintain proper self-hygiene, Najeeb also decided to clean all the vehicles passing through Kanjirappally town for free! "After enquiring with the health officials, I created a disinfectant using bleaching powder, antiseptic lotion and lemongrass oil. After making this in bulk, I got some volunteers to help out, and we went around spraying it on vehicles, roads, stores, bus stands and other public areas, he says. Along with these activities, Najeeb also distributed pamphlets and conducted awareness programmes on COVID-19 for people to get a better understanding of the pandemic and its effects. His wife Beena and two children are his pillars of support and strength, and

actively involved in all of his voluntary activities. “A lot of people criticize me saying that I do all of this for publicity, but for me, it's solely about the satisfaction of doing my part for the society, he explains. Najeeb also has a deeply personal reason as to why he helps the needy. “Almost a year ago, I was hit by a lorry. The doctors had said that there was no hope, but after eight months of treatment, I can walk and do all physical activities without any assistance. So when you get a chance to live again, you might as well help save lives. In the past few days, several people have offered monetary help to Najeeb, but he insists that he is happy doing this work, and has no regrets in spending his own money for that purpose. “I'm a small-town guy, and there are a lot of limitations to what I can do to help stop the spread of this pandemic, but I want to try my best, he concludes.

About 400 migrant fishermen marooned in harbour in Kerala

https://english.mathrubhumi.com/news/kerala/about-400-migrant-fishermen-marooned-in-harbour-in-kozhikode-1.4654524

"The migrant labourers in fishing industry are struggling to survive after the complete lockdown was implemented. Over 400 labourers are trapped in various harbours across the district at present. Most of them are from Kolkata. More than 200 boats have anchored in Puthiyappa harbour. The migrant labourers are sleeping inside the boats. Some boat owners provide them food. When the cooking gas stocked for preparing food while fishing in the sea also was exhausted, the workers in some boats are starving. The lockdown will continue for 16 more days. The labourers have no idea of how to survive till then without food and other basic amenities. There are about 6-15 people in every boat. But they do not have any masks or sanitizers. They also said that no tests including the thermal gun temperature checking were done when the coronavirus threat exists. ""No health officials visited here for even a checkup. Even if we could not go home, we want to stay here safely at least,"" the labourers said. Some of them have been trapped in the boat for 9 days. A coastal police officer in Elathoor said that one among them was shifted to beach hospital due to fever the other day. People who came in contact with the labourers also are not subjected to tests. Many of the labourers had returned from home just before the lockdown was implemented. Those at Beypore port returned to their native place while others remain confused over survival.

Kerala: Fishing harbours slip into silent slumber

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/mar/27/fishing-harbours-slip-into-silent-slumber-2122029.html

"The fishing harbours across the state wear a deserted look as the fishing community has stopped venturing into the sea. The harbours that used to bustle with activity have slipped into slumber. Mechanised and country boats lie anchored near the harbour in long rows. It is another

season of misery for the fishing community. The traditional fishermen and the mechanised boat owners have voluntarily decided to stop the fishing operations in view of the lockdown. As the seafood exports have also come to a grinding halt, the sector is witnessing a total shutdown. The mechanised boat owners were forced to stop fishing operations two weeks ago as most of the workers from Tamil Nadu returned to their native places in view of the Coronavirus threat. The traditional fishermen decided to wind up fishing operations in Tuesday after the government announced a complete lockdown. “Most of the traditional fishermen had stopped venturing into the sea in view of the depleting fish stocks in the coastal sea. A single day's fishing expense comes to Rs 25,000 and most of the boats don't get enough catch to meet the expenses, said Traditional Fishermen Co-ordination Committee secretary PB Dayanandan. There are around 1.41 lakh fishermen in the state and around 5 lakh people depend on the sector for their livelihood. “We have urged the chief minister to announce a compensation package for the fishing community and provide a monthly compensation of Rs 5,000 to each fisherman. All fishermen families should be provided free ration and medical aid, demanded Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi president Charles George. “The fishing industry is in deep peril as seafood export companies have been hit hard by crisis. Most of the exporters are holding stocks and payment to boat owners has been delayed. Ice plant owners, boat workshops, auctioneers and other stakeholders are also feeling the pinch, said All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association general secretary Joseph Xavier Kalappurackal. Exports “We had dispatched consignments to China, Vietnam, the US and Europe during the past week. However, most of these consignments have not received clearance certificate, which has landed us in deep trouble. We have sent a representation to the Union Commerce Minister seeking immediate intervention to avoid rejection of the consignments, said Seafood Exporters Association of India Kerala region president Alex K Ninan. “The bulk of our seafood exports is to South-East Asian countries, China and Europe. We will ensure that the relief announced by the government is extended to the fishermen, said Fisheries deputy director Maja Jose.

Coronavirus should drive Kerala to adopt sustainable marine fishing practices…

https://english.manoramaonline.com/news/columns/straight-talk/2020/03/28/opinion-coronavirus-impact-on-fishing.html

"News is quickly filtering in from all over the country and the world about the toll which the novel coronavirus is taking on coastal fishing communities. Most communities are on lockdown mode. In most developing countries, marine fishing communities are already development-disadvantaged and marked by lower human development indices compared to their respective national averages. The extraordinary situation created by the virus has only exacerbated their conditions. Kerala is no exception. Another important disadvantage which fishing communities face in the context of the coronavirus is their much higher population density on land and the far greater and inevitable physical contact which the men experience

while fishing on their crafts. We do not have any evidence of the life of the virus in the hot, saline environment at sea and the coast. If indeed the life of the virus is significantly lower, then this might compensate for the lower possibility for physical distancing at sea. We do not know. Time to rethink Further, once fish is landed – on the beach or in the ports – crowding is inevitable. Fish auctions are notorious for both high decibel levels and intense physical interactions between the participants. This poses a grave threat in the context of the virus and perhaps conjures images of the wet markets of Wuhan were the virus is said to have originated. Banning such fish auctions cuts at the root of the fishers' livelihoods and that of those who distribute fish from the landing site to markets and customers. The above circumstances at sea and at the landing centres, therefore, call for rethinking the way fishing and fish marketing is conducted in the context of the virus. Fishing must continue. It is a source of livelihood and an important item of food for the poor and rich. What can be done? Restrictions need of the hour Fishers have reported that they are perhaps safer at sea away from the risks of the virus on land. However, due to the overall drop in demand following a lockdown of consumers, there is a strong case for restricting the level of fishing currently undertaken. The collective initiative for regulating fishing, first fish sales and distribution must come from the village level. Fishing must be restricted at the level of each fishing village/centre by instituting a rotation system where a fraction of the fishers goes fishing every day. This can be arranged by a collective and transparent rota or lottery system. Together with this, a further restriction which should be imposed is that the number of persons in a fishing craft must be such that the principle of physical distancing can be maintained. Also, fishing should be restricted to a maximum of an 8 to 12-hour cycle – preferably during day time. These are all measures which must be agreed by local consensus which can be mediated by the local religious and cultural organisations and the associations/ cooperatives of the fishers in each village. Such decisions are imperative if any economic activity is to happen in marine fishing in this time of crisis. All the above restrictions will work well for the fishers and the fish. The lower supply caused by the smaller total harvest will ensure that prices do not fall drastically. And the lower crew size will ensure that fishing nets such as bottom trawls, encircling nets, purse-seines, large gillnets cannot be utilised and thus ensure a respite for fish and the marine environment. Taken together these measures act to create economic and ecological sustainability. Once the fishing trip is over, given the extensive use of cell-phones by the fishers, they can communicate the quantum and species harvested in advance of returning. Since auctions will not be permitted, the system of setting a minimum floor price for each of the important species of fish is the way forward. There can be an average price announced by the Fisheries Department based on market data collected earlier. Each fishing centre or village can also be linked, for example, to the local level community kitchen in the area and smaller varieties of fish which can be easily fried (sardines, mackerels, anchovies) can be supplied there for a fixed price. This ensures that fish need not move long distances to reach the consumption point. Fresh fish delivery Another option in fishing centres which are closer to urban centres will be for a small group of youth from the fishing community

to first create a local WhatsApp fish-producer-consumer group (FISHPROCOM) within 5-10 km radius from the landing site and get fresh fish delivered directly to the consumers taking the adequate safety measures and the road permits from the police. Fish can also be distributed to all the households in the fishing village each day as part of the customary fish sharing practice to those who are unable to fish. Fish which remains unsold can be salted or stored in ice as appropriate. For the latter, the supply of medium-sized insulated fish boxes to the villages practising such restrictions by the Fisheries Department is desirable. Women fish vendors from the fishing villages will not be able to continue their itinerant trade. This should be seen as a blessing. They should be provided with an income transfer which can be provided by the major religious or cultural institution in the village with the support of associations and cooperatives and the funds of the welfare board. It is important that women stay in their homes during the lockdown for their own safety. Apart from such village sponsored actions relating to fishing and the first sale of fish, it must be ensured that the food security and welfare measures announced by the Government are effectively implemented at the village level. The crisis caused by the coronavirus can be viewed as a good opportunity for marine fisheries in Kerala to comprehend the merits in restricting fishing levels, leading to more sustainable small-scale fishing practices, creating a fair price system, fostering greater local marketing and creating newer physical and social infrastructure.

Kerala's fishers seek government intervention

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-seek-govt-intervention/article31200622.ece

"Traditional fishers have demanded immediate government intervention in addressing problems associated with supply chain, affecting the livelihood of many. Despite fish falling under the essential commodity list, the fishers are struggling to market their catch due to various restrictions. "Fishing should be regulated, not banned as a total ban will create many issues in coastal areas. Fisheries Department and Matsyafed should ensure fair price for the catch, said T.Peter, general secretary, National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF). NFF had earlier appealed to the Centre to devise immediate economic and social security measures for the unorganised workers as part of comprehensive steps to address COVID -19. Since the lockdown has already affected the livelihood of those dependent on fishing and allied activities, Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation has demanded a special economic package for the fishing community. " The Centre should provide a allowance of monthly Rs.10,000 for three months for fishers, added Mr.Peter.

Seafood industry comes to a standstill in Ernakulam district in Kerala

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/seafood-industry-comes-to-a-standstill-in-

ernakulam-dist/articleshow/74799065.cms

"The fishing and seafood industry in Kochi has come to a standstill with many harbours and fish-landing centres along the district's coast shutting down in the wake of Covid-19. Munambam harbour was shut down indefinitely from Tuesday noon onwards. Boat owners from Thoppumpady, Kalamukku, Murukkinpadam and Chellanam have decided to stop fishing until further notice. The decision comes after the health and fisheries department's advisory to harbour managers and boat owners to stop auction of fish to avoid crowding of people to ensure social distancing. Many of the fish peeling centres that provide the raw material to the seafood processing industry have closed down. "The seafood export industry is facing one of its worst dips in the recent past with seafood exports coming down to less than 40% of normal business due to lockdowns in many countries. With harbours closing down, seafood processing will be affected severely. Peeling centres run by private contractors have already shut, said Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) regional president Alex K Ninan. "Many fishing boats in Kochi do not have enough employees due to Covid-19 fear. Most employees are from other states and many of them have already returned to their home states. Moreover, the harbours and fishing centres are frequented by people from different parts and there is high chance of physical contact between them. With seafood exports witnessing a dip, it is pointless to conduct operations ignoring the spread of infection. Around 300 boats here will stop functioning now, said P P Gireesh, chairman, boat owners association, Munambam. Kerala Matsyathozhilali Aikya Vedi said that the export of seafood has drastically declined over the past one month. "Only two or three reefer containers are now leaving Vallarapadam container terminal instead of 50 daily. With all fishermen deciding not to go to work, their livelihood is stopped. The government should initiate some measures to help fishermen to overcome this, said Aikya Vedi state president Charles George. A senior fisheries official said that strict guidelines have been issued to all fish landing centres and harbours in Ernakulam to ensure hygiene and social distancing. "But people managing harbour say that it is difficult to implement them. So they have stopped the operations, said the official.

Customs cracks down on fishing boats with Chinese tracking devices in Kerala

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/mar/24/customs-cracks-down-on-fishing-boats-with-chinese-tracking-devices-2120754.html

"To ensure the security of the coastline and prevent smuggling activities through the sea route, the Customs has launched a crackdown on fishing vessels operating from Kerala shores using China-made Automatic Identification System-tracking devices which are mandatory for vessels now.The decision was taken after multiple agencies raised concerns regarding security issues following fishing boats fitted with the Chinese AIS were found on the Kerala coast. Recently, Customs Commissioner Sumit Kumar directed its marine units to intensify checking

on fishing vessels which are not using the standard AIS recommended by the government.The marine units have already tracked down 18 such vessels operating from various harbours in Kerala. “The AIS is an important device to track the movement of fishing vessels. However, the Chinese AIS devices often show wrong locations of the vessels, posing a threat to national security. The vessels fitted with such AIS can be used for smuggling activities as agencies will find it hard to track them. We have issued a show-cause notice to owners of the vessels fitted with Chinese AIS. Action can be taken under Section 11(2)(s) of the Customs Act, he said. Difficult to track A standard AIS costs around Rs 40,000 but it is provided to fishing vessel owners at a subsidised rate. At the same time, the Chinese AIS is available for around Rs 6,000.Each AIS has a Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number with country code. The fishing vessels with Chinese AIS is mistakenly identified as a Chinese vessel with a respective MMSI number.Last year, the Coast Guard had taken up the matter with the state's Fisheries Department. ID cards must Similarly, the Customs has also decided to initiate legal action against the fishing boat crew who engage in fishing activities in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (up to 200 nautical miles) without valid identity cards and related documents. “Often during the search operations, we find that fishermen don't keep valid identity cards to confirm their nationality while working on fishing vessels at sea. We have decided to register cases in such situations to make coastal security foolproof, Kumar said. However, one of the major concerns before the Customs is not having enough marine units in Kerala. Currently, the marine units are stationed in Kochi and Beypore. New marine units are expected to start in Kollam, Vizhinjam and Lakshadweep. There are 11 boats with marine unit personnel in Kerala. The last boat was procured in 2007. “Currently, the discussion is on with the state government to start two more marine units in Kerala. We are also looking to start a marine unit in Lakshadweep which comes under Customs formation in Kerala, he said. Status report - Chinese AIS is popular among fishing boat owners due to its cheap price - 18 fishing vessels with Chinese AIS identified - Show-cause notices to be issued against owners of boats with Chinese AIS - Case to be registered if fishermen venturing into sea don't keep valid identity cards - More Customs marine units to be deployed in Kerala and Lakshadweep

Income in ruins, fishers call for famine package in Kerala

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/income-in-ruins-fishers-call-for-famine-package/article31167528.ece

"Selling the catch is a problem in the wake of restrictions imposed in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak. Representatives of over seven lakh people directly depending on fishing activities in the State have called for a “fish famine package and more clarity on what should be done at a time when the country is under a lockdown to fight the spread of COVID-19. Financially in dire straits, small-time traditional fishers venture out. But selling the catch is a problem because of the present restrictions. The Fisheries Department has told fishers to

abandon the traditional auction system to prevent crowding at auction centres, says Antony Kurisinkal of the Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation. The fishers have voluntarily given up the auction system already and shut fish landing hubs. Therefore, he suggested that the government frame a system, perhaps introduce a token system, to allow fishers to sell the catch by turn to avoid crowding at sale centres. “The police and local authorities must help. This is a must considering the importance of fish in everyday diet, especially in coastal areas, as maintained by the government, he adds. Fishers' unions have also expressed anguish over government reluctance to announce what they call a “fish famine package despite repeated requests. Oil sardines fishery is at one of its most difficult phases and the fate of about a lakh fishers is tied to oil sardine catch, says Charles George of the Matsya Thozhialali Aikya Vedhi. Sardine catch Sardine catch has dropped to around 77,000 tonnes in 2017 from 3.99 lakh tonnes in 2012, he says as he calls for an allowance of Rs.5,000 to fishermen families in addition to monthly free rations provided during the famine months. Survival package “There are 50 inboard boats, 80 purseiners, and around 3,800 trawl boats operating out of Ernakulam harbours. They have shut down their business and a survival package is a must for thousands who depend on their operations, he adds. Meanwhile, fishers have urged the government to allow at least a few of them to travel to take care of engines of boats docked in places away from homes. Hundreds of boats from Alappuzha are harboured at centres such as Chellanam and Thoppumpady. Without constant maintenance the engines will be damaged, says Mr. Antony. With the State under a lockdown, the police are allowing only essential travel. Fishers are aware of the circumstances but maintenance of the boats is a grave issue, he adds.

Severe shock to trawlers as exports slump in Kerala

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/severe-shock-to-trawlers-as-exports-slump/article31155670.ece

"They set out for the sea from a bustling harbour, but several deep-sea trawlers that returned to Neendakara on Tuesday had to dock under most unusual circumstances. With auctions banned and a State-wide lockdown, many of them had to abandon their catch of export-quality shrimp after they failed to find any buyers. “We waited for long, but no agent turned up. Usually we sell each crate for not less than Rs.1,000, but on Tuesday we offered it for Rs.100 and Rs.200 to local vendors and the rest was dumped back into the sea. We were told about the restrictions on our way back, but we were definitely not prepared for this, says Marty, a fisher. Around 200 trawlers from Neendakara usually venture into the deep-sea prawn ground between Kollam and Alappuzha, mostly catering to processing plants and export companies. “There are hundreds of peelings sheds in Alappuzha, Ambalappuzha and Aroor, but Health officials asked to close them in connection with COVID-19 prevention. They are our major clients and it's not easy for us to find another market, he adds. Boat owners say unlike

traditional sector, it's not possible for deep-sea trawlers to operate without auctions. “The Fisheries Department now decides the price, but they cannot ensure buyers. We usually net 20 to 25 varieties of fish and most of them are export-oriented types with very limited demand in domestic market, says Peter, a boat owner. Equally distressed are the small-scale merchants and fish vendors who cannot make their regular trips to the harbour due to the lockdown. “There is no public transport and it's not possible for us to reach the market or supply it to our regular customers. Also, there are many restrictions for entering harbours and selling fish now, says Sibi, a fish vendor. Trawlers return to the harbour after spending several days in the sea at a stretch, each trip costing over ?2 lakh. Since venturing into the sea during the lockdown can cause huge financial burden for them, the All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association has decided to suspend their operations till the crisis is over. Around 4,000 boats from the mechanised sector in the State will stay off waters in the coming days as it's practically impossible for the boats to continue their trade under the current circumstances.

Kerala government new system to replace auctions in harbours

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/new-system-to-replace-auctions-in-harbours/article31145664.ece

"Given the COVID-19 scenario in the State, the Fisheries Department has decided to replace open auctions in fishing harbours with a new system, Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma said on Monday. The new arrangement is meant to avoid crowds at the harbours. Under it, harbour management societies will fix the prices of each variety of fish based on the average of their going price in auctions over the past one week. The Minister has sought the co-operation of all stakeholders in the sector for implementing the system. The government will be forced to impose ban on fishing in harbours that refuse to co-operate with the new arrangement, she said. Representatives of fishermen, trade unions in the sector, local self government institutions and the departments of fisheries and harbour engineering are members of the Harbour Management Societies.

Fishing harbours close, just a month’s stock left in Kerala

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/mar/24/fishing-harbours-close-just-a-months-stock-left-2120748.html

"In view of the lockdown from Monday midnight, fishing harbours in the district, including Munambam Harbour, will close down on Tuesday afternoon after the last of the boats return. The state government had directed cancellation of auctioning and asked the catch to be sold off at a fixed rate. However, citing social obligation, the fisherfolk under the aegis of Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (TUCI) decided to anchor all their boats. “Earlier, it was fish drought that hit fishers' earnings. Now Covid-19 has dealt a massive blow, said Charles

George, president,TUCI. Eariler, fishing harbours at Chellanam and Thoppumpady had closed, he said. “The fishing harbour at Kalamukku closed down on Monday and Munambam will close on Tuesday, he added. He said from the health angle, fishermen from Thengapattinam fishing in Kerala waters have been asked not to come to the Kochi coast. “They have been asked to dock at Thengapattinam till Easter gets over, he said. “These are bad days for the over 1.5 lakh fisherfolk in the state, said Charles. He said he has written to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Fisheries Minister J Mercy Kutty Amma seeking financial package for the fisherfolk. Maja Jose, deputy director, Fisheries Department, Ernakulam, said the fishers voluntarily decided to close down the harbours. “Once the boats that have gone out return, Munambam harbour will close by Tuesday afternoon, said Maja. Alex Thomas of Daily Fish, said with boats not going out to the sea there will be no fresh catch. “This will lead to a decrease in availability, which will affect the online delivery also. As per our calculation we have stocks to last a month, he said.

Kerala’s fisheries sector struggles to stay afloat amid virus scare

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fisheries-sector-struggles-to-stay-afloat-amid-virus-scare/article31131475.ece

"The State's fisheries sector in likely to incur huge losses in the beginning of the new financial year with top export destinations closing their doors and nearly zero demand from high-end hotel chains and resorts. Those working in the seafood industry say a number of factors, including the ban on shipments, newly imposed restrictions at fish landing centres, and logistical glitches have left the sector in total chaos. Major markets “China and Europe are our major markets and since both are in the grip of COVID-19, there has been a mass cancellation of orders. While the shipments to China stopped immediately after the Chinese New Year, Europe buyers started citing logistical issues at import hubs from March. Our plant, which can handle daily shipments, could only manage three shipments in the last 90 days. We are facing such a crisis for the first time. It will take two or three months for the sector to stabilise, says Shajahan K.S., a Kochi-based exporter. While some exporters are still stocking varieties such as vannamei shrimp, demand for the most-sought-after items such as squid, cuttle fish, octopus and ribbon fish has come down considerably. Though there are still takers for tuna, its market is not very large and is mostly limited to Asian countries such as Thailand. Though some exporters got enquiries from China this week, the prices quoted were very low, hinting that business will not be back to normal soon. Dip in catch “The sector was already struggling with a dip in catch and now with marine cargo movements coming to a standstill, we are finding it difficult to survive. Export companies are offering minimal prices due to the market fluctuations, says Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association. Another blow came when star hotels and resorts stopped their purchases, opting to keep a bare minimum inventory. “They used to offer better prices for shrimp, crab and some other varieties.

But with nearly nil tourist inflow, that door was also closed, says Francis, fisher. Guest labourers returning to their States due to COVID-19 scare is another crucial factor. For the last few days trawlers are finding it difficult to ensure enough hands on board. The recent restrictions in conducting auctions at harbours and fish landing centres have added to the sector's difficulties.

Kerala: Geotube breakwater at Poonthura soon

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/geotube-breakwater-at-poonthura-soon/article31064447.ece

"Coastal protection works using sea walls made of groynes and rocks maybe a thing of the past with the Fisheries Department going ahead with the first offshore breakwater using geotubing at Poonthura. Fisheries Minister J.Mercykutty Amma told the Assembly on Friday that the project is set to take off in April. The project is being implemented with the technical support of the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT). The department had a few months ago begun a pilot of the project at Poonthura, with the construction of a 700-metre-long offshore breakwater using geotubing. "The NIOT Director was in the State on Thursday. We conducted a review of the pilot. The tender has also been opened and we have identified a contractor. The first such breakwater in the State will be from Poonthura to Shanghumukhom. We expect the work to begin by April this year with an expected completion time of three months. The NIOT has experience in building breakwater using geotubes at Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu, which will be the model we will be following here,she said. The Minister said that if the project is proved successful, it can be replicated across the State's coastline. This will help in protecting the coastline without mowing down hills for rocks. Funds for the project have been sanctioned from the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB). With the implementation of the project, the breakwater will intercept the waves 120m from the shore. The reduced intensity of the waves will prevent coastal erosion, and allow beach enhancement. Fishers too will have no problems in beaching their boats. The offshore breakwater will be built parallel to the shore. Five breakwaters of 100-m length will be installed initially. They will be situated 50 m apart. Boats will be able to reach the shore through these gaps.

Kerala's seafaring fisherwoman honoured for breaking male bastion

https://english.manoramaonline.com/lifestyle/women/2020/03/06/kerala-seafraing-

fisherwoman-honoured-breaking-male-bastion.html

"After becoming the first woman in the country to get a deep-sea fishing licence, Rekha Karthikeyan of Thrissur district was on Friday felicitated by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for excelling in what is conventionally a male domain. At a function in the MPEDAs headquarters here, Rekha was given a memento and a pair of life-jackets besides a financial package of Rs 6.6 lakh jointly contributed by Accelerated Freeze Drying Co Ltd, Tasty Nibbles Group and Seafood Export Association of India. MPEDA chairman K S Srinivas, while praising Rekha for her grit and determination, expressed happiness over women entering vocations that have traditionally been male bastions. These days, she fishes in the deep sea, covering 50 nautical miles daily on an average, he added. All that, without the mariner's compass or even a life-jacket. Rekha, 40, who lives with her husband and four children at their house in coastal Chettuva, south of Guruvayur, recalled that it was 12 years ago that she, without knowing how to swim, first ventured into deep sea with her husband K V Karthikeyan. While the sea is expected to be choppy, resistance awaited me back on the shores too. For, society kept saying fishing cannot be a females profession, said Rekha, who originally hails from Koorkenchery in suburban Thrissur. Women must not be indifferent towards injustice. We need to take up challenges boldly, she added, citing experiences from personal and professional fronts. Notwithstanding the initial hiccups, Rekha and her husband, of late a heart patient, would take their boat in the small hours (around 3 am) to fish. She also learned swimming and later applied for a licence to fish deep in the sea. Authorities refused to give her the document until the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute intervened and arranged to grant Rekha the licence in early 2019. "It is not practical to go out to the sea without a helper in the boat. These days, it is hard to find people to for this job. Chettan (Karthikeyan) looked out for someone for a long time and finally I decided to give it a try. We couldn't afford to not go fishing; we have four girls to bring up and there's never enough. Two were better than one and I was determined to give it my best if it would help him stay in the job. Now I am as good as any fisherman in casting the net, pulling the net in, steering the boat and so on. Of course, we faced the wrath of the village as tradition stops women from going to the sea. Now they have reconciled to the fact. The superstitions never scared me. Why would I be, when the sea is like my mother? I know I have nothing to be afraid of when I am in her lap, Rekha had said during an interview Onmanorama featured on December 9, 2017.

Kerala: The dying lake of Wayanad

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/the-dying-lake-of-wayanad/article31026664.ece

"Debates on conserving biodiversity-rich areas often fall on deaf ears. The Pookode Lake

in Wayanad, an ecologically fragile district, is a glaring example. The second largest freshwater lake in the State is dying. A large part of the 5.172 hectares of the lake has turned into green grassland because of soil erosion brought about by uncontrolled construction and farming activities taking place in areas around the lake. The lake is dying mainly due to anthropogenic activities, eutrophication (a process by which waterbodies receive excess nutrients that stimulate excessive plant growth), and accumulation of sediments owing to soil erosion. According to a study, the maximum depth of the lake has declined to 6.5 metres from 12 metres nearly four decades ago. Construction activities by the Tribal Development Department atop the hill, hardly 500 metres away from the lake to provide houses to landless tribals, pose threat to the waterbody. Four streams originating from the surrounding hills provide the lifeline of the waterbody. Any construction activity on the nearby hills will sound the death knell for the streams and finally, the lake. Pookode Lake is an important eco-tourism destination in the district. According to a recent study by the Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Kozhikode, every year the number of tourists visiting the lake is on the rise. The study also found that the environmental quality of the lake was deteriorating owing to various human activities. The lake environment is extremely sensitive to environmental changes in its watershed. Worse, when phenomena like eutrophication and pollution occur, even though they may proceed slowly, the damage caused is correspondingly difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. Though the lake is in the possession of the Fisheries Department, it has been developed as an eco-tourism centre on the direction of the district administration in the 1990s. It is the habitat of several endemic and critically endangered fish species, including Puntius pookodensis (Pookode Barb). The lake shore is also a major habitat of nearly 70 species of birds and nearly 60 species of Odonate. Today, more than half the portion of the lake is covered with three species of water weeds. The long-term damage to aquatic native biodiversity they can cause is still unknown. It is high time an urgent intervention was made to preserve the lake. Unfortunately, the district administration is yet to adopt measures to save the dying lake. Though a main stream of the Thalipuzha River, a tributary of the Kabani, originates from the lake, the natural flow of water has been closed by the Tourism authorities for boating purposes. We should pay heed to experts on freshwater resources who warn that while what happens in the air, on land, and in the sea, affects lakes and rivers, we are all affected by what happens in lakes and rivers.

Kerala: Boat owners yet to remit dues to fishermen's fund

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/boat-owners-yet-to-remit-dues-to-fishermens-fund/article31003901.ece

"Even as the Fisheries Department has set a deadline for fishing boat owners to remit their annual contribution to the Kerala Fishermen's Welfare Fund Board, many are yet to pay citing the steep decline in their income. Though the owners of bigger fishing boats are

supposed to remit ?15,000 as their annual contribution to the fund, only the owners of a few newer boats have so far remitted the amount. The steep hike in the revised boat registration and license renewal fee is reportedly discouraging many to remit the amount. Now, the hiked license fee for boats with 22-metre length is ?50,000 a year, which is not a fair calculation according to boat owners in Kerala. Though the boat owners are supposed to remit both the license renewal fee and welfare fund contribution, they are urging the Fisheries Department to come out with an 'affordable option' for the fishers. March 13 deadline According to Fisheries Department officials, the last date fixed for remittance of the contribution is on March 13. Smaller boats with in-board engines too will have to comply with the rule and keep the receipt ready for verification during inspections. Only those with a valid registration and renewed license will be able to remit the contribution to the welfare fund. "The traditional boat operators in the sector will never be able to bear the license renewal fee and the contribution to the welfare fund together. With the sector in crisis, fishers are giving up their work and searching for other jobs, says V. Umesh, a boat owner and the district president of All India Fishermen Congress. He also said talks on the matter with the Fisheries Department had not yielded any result. Boat owners in Kozhikode district say there is no provision to remit the amount in instalments. With the rigid rules, many boat owners are finding it hard to renew their boat licence.

Fisherwomen in Kerala and their discontentment with globalisation

https://feminisminindia.com/2020/03/10/fisherwomen-kerala-discontentment-globalisation/

"Kerala has a coastline of about 590 km., out of which 60% (as of 2017) has been usurped by the government and private companies. Large and small scale projects are implemented on this land (most of them funded by institutions like the Asian Development Bank (ADB) or the World Bank and by the government), with very little regard for environmental norms, and claiming resources that should be available to the community that inhabits these areas. Fishing has been a source of subsistence for traditional fisher folk communities, both for fishermen and fisherwomen, whereby the work done by the latter has been barely acknowledged. With the advent of globalisation and mechanisation, radical changes have come to the sector and to the communities associated with it. Production has shifted from communities to industries. Globalisation And Its Effects On Coastal Communities After Independence, it was felt that modernisation and mechanisation of the fishing sector would help increase productive capacity. The Indo-Norwegian Project (INP) – a tripartite agreement signed in 1953 in New Delhi between the United Nations, the Government of India, and the Government of Norway- came to be as an investment by a Social Democratic government in helping a "backward economy. With the INP, came technological advancements in harvesting processes. These advancements were supposedly meant to promote economic

growth and bestow upon these villages for better infrastructure. The 1960s saw an increase in the international demand for prawns, which encouraged the government to promote export-oriented prawn fisheries. Mechanised boats were built, and fishermen were trained to use trawl nets. Export oriented fisheries and a high rate of investment allowed merchants, financiers and middlemen to slide into the sector, gradually pushing out the traditional fishing community from mechanised fishing. Prolonged periods of mechanised deep sea fishing and aquaculture, also a brought about a multitude of problems ranging from over-fishing, depletion of the oceans, indebtedness of the fish-workers etc. all of which posed an acute threat to the fisheries. The state attempted to carry out the mechanisation program, while simultaneously creating producer cooperatives. Mechanised boats were to be issued only through producer cooperatives to groups of fishermen. However, as John Kurien points out, these cooperatives were often dominated by financiers and middlemen and were the furthest thing from being fishermen organisations. In order to counter this 'nexus of exploitation', communities of artisanal fishermen saw it necessary to organise themselves, and forge linkages. The cooperatives that were formed by the fishermen, differed from the ones created by the government, in that they were run by members of the community and facilitated small repayments, at low interest rates. The Kerala Swatantrata Matsya Thozilali Federation (KSMTF) was one such organisation. These organisations led to the 'political awakening' of the artisanal fishing community. As trade unions and cooperatives cropped up, the coastal communities of Kerala witnessed a barrage of hunger strikes, and demonstrations. Their chief demand was that trawling during monsoon season (breeding season for the fish near the shore) should be banned. Other demands included curbing the pollution of inland water resources, a comprehensive regulation by the Marine Regulation Act and that mechanised boats must not operate 5 km. beyond the coast. Women: The Worst Affected There are approximately 5.4 million people engaged in fisheries in India. Women account for 1.6 million, and more than a million come from the 222 fishing villages in Kerala. Most of these women depend on supplementary activities like processing and marketing of fish for survival. However, the conception of the INP was based on the premise that fisherwomen had little to no involvement in the fisheries. Women in fishing households are traditionally not allowed to go to sea. They look after childcare, and domestic chores. However, most of them were also involved in supporting activities such as head-load fish vending, deferring coconut husks and manual rope making, shell collection, processing, marketing, net-making etc. These activities served as a way for the women to supplement their family income. Taking up any of these activities was considered to be a "loss of status for the family, and hence, when asked (through surveys, interviews etc), the matter was mostly kept private, leading to an erasure of the work carried out by these women. As a result of this erasure, violence was meted out to women, both on their identity in society and on their physical entity. The divide between men and women grew wider. As men from local fishing communities were displaced as fishers and "procurer of produce, they were still absorbed by the industry as head load workers, agents, fish-sellers, thereby displacing the women. They had

greater access to technology and greater mobility within the markets and the villages, which allowed to them to do so. It was the fisherwomen who sold the catch the men brought in at markets. A fall in fish stocks meant that they would have to procure the produce from elsewhere, deal with the cooperatives, and resist manipulative moneylenders. Less produce meant less income, and less income left them indebted to money lenders. And with the traditional fish markets swallowed by big corporations, they were left all the more vulnerable and insecure. They found themselves having to travel long distances to sell their produce in markets, and yet they were being denied entry on public transport because of their smelly baskets. To add insult to injury, large scale sand mining activities made the water unfit for consumption, forcing women to walk long distances to fetch drinking water. A loss in productive activity had the men turn to alcoholism and gambling, leading to a spike in cases of wife beating and desertion and sexual harassment. The Resistance As women started to collectivise, they started off by getting involved in religious activities and discussions on topics of common interest. The late 1970s-80s saw a rise in the number of women's organisations in coastal villages. By the end of the 1980s, the women members of KSMTF decided to set up a women's wing – the Theeradesa Mahila Vedi (TMV). Women like Aleyamma Vijayan, Sister Philomene Mary, Sister Alice and Magline Peter set this movement in motion. Since its inception, TMV has waged continued resistance against the incessant marginalisation and exploitation of local fishing communities. The one that has been most proudly talked about is their fight for special buses. The women took to the streets, picketed, marched, fasted and organised a strike for about four to five years, until the government relented and provided them with special buses. In fact, the first ever march of the women fish vendors (1979) saw them march with their fish baskets to the secretariat to demand for the right to access public transport. Next on their agenda, demands were placed at the panchayat markets they worked for, for the provision of basic amenities like drinking water, ice boxes, a toilet, a space to change their clothes and protection from the goondas who circulated in these markets. Demonstrations have also been organised to protest unfair tax collection by the contractors. TMV and its members have also stepped in and pursued cases of domestic violence and sexual harassment, that eventually culminated in the arrest of the perpetrator, giving women the confidence to report cases of violence. In 1992, the fisherwomen, along with the fish-workers association, set up thatched huts in front of the secretariat's office where they cooked food, and slept for 15 days until fisherwomen were included in government schemes offering financial aid and insurance. Not only did this give them added financial security, but also demanded that they be recognised as fish workers by the state. The Resistance Continues The resistance by the artisanal fisherfolk community is the epitome of the phrase “one step forward, two step backwards. Although the fisherwomen were given special buses plying to and from markets, in 2004, they took to picketing the office of the bus administration to discuss the shoddy maintenance of bus operations. In December 2004, a tsunami swept through coastal communities in Kerala and along with it, income and the ability to access cash for most

women. Relief shelters offered very little privacy and sanitation facilities, separate toilets etc., and also put them at the risk of being harassed by men and being overlooked by male doctors. Livelihood programs, focused on the number of boats lost, thereby ignoring the work done by women and were simultaneously excluded from relief measures. In 2017, they carried out a 65 day struggle against the construction of LPG storage plant built by the Indian Oil Corporation in Kochi. Till date, most local fish vendors and hawkers face the threat of eviction by corporate lobbies, "but it is the resistance of the fisherwomen that have kept these forces at bay.

Fisheries begins identifying land for Punargeham project in Kerala

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kochi/fisheries-begins-identifying-land-for-punargeham-project/articleshow/74519695.cms

"The fisheries department officials have started identifying land for the implementation of 'Punargeham' housing project. The plan is to complete the identification of suitable land at the earliest to complete the relocation of fishermen living in the 50-metre limit of the sea to safer location. The Punargeham project of the fisheries department aims to relocate fishermen families living in the close vicinity of the sea to safer locations by identifying suitable land. So far 210 fishermen families in the district have applied for housing benefit under Punargeham project. We have identified land to construct houses for 21 beneficiaries, said an official with the fisheries department. The list of beneficiaries and the land details have been submitted to the district-level monitoring committee, the official said. The department will spend Rs 10 lakh each on every applicant. The amount will be utilized for the purchase of land and for construction activities. While the government has decided to allot Rs 6 lakh for purchase of land, the remaining Rs 4 lakh will be used for the construction of house. If it is possible to get land for a lesser price then the excess amount will also be invested for the construction of house. A total of Rs 21 crore has been allocated for the project's first phase, comprising construction of 210 houses. Officials expect more applications after the completion of the first phase.

Kerala: Traces of formalin found in fish sold in the city

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/traces-of-formalin-found-in-fish-sold-in-the-city/article30994363.ece

"Traces of formalin, a chemical widely used as tissue preservative, was found in 70 kg of fish in a surprise check jointly conducted by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and the Fisheries Department at the wholesale and retail fish markets at Ukkadam here on Thursday. Both FSSAI and Fisheries Department issued warning to traders not to sell fish added with the preservative. They also seized 430 kg of stale fish from the markets which was

destroyed along with the 70 kg of fish found with traces of formalin, exposure to which is associated with certain types of cancer. Simultaneous raids were conducted by two teams led by food safety officers S. Vijayaraja and N. Kumaragurubaran at the two markets on Thursday morning. Inspector of Fisheries Padmaja was also part of the raids. Speaking to The Hindu, Mr. Vijayaraja said that traces of formalin in fish was found in a rapid test conducted using a testing kit provided by the Government. “For the test, we rub a tissue provided in the kit against suspected fish. Then a drop of reagent is dipped on the tissue. The tissue turns blue if the fish contains formalin. It becomes light to dark blue based on the level of formalin contained in the fish, he explained. According to him, fish brought from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh were found with traces of formalin, which traders in those places added to the consignments before they were transported to Coimbatore. K. Tamilselvan, designated officer of FSSAI in Coimbatore, said that similar surprise raids will be conducted in future too. In Tiruppur, officials from the FSSAI and Fisheries Department inspected fish market in Thennampalayam, Palladam Road. FSSAI Designated Officer (Tiruppur) B. Vijayalalithambigai said that no fish laced with formalin was found during the inspection. However, officials seized and destroyed nearly 20 kg of rotten fish.

Kerala: Kochi’s fish markets await modernization

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/kochis-fish-markets-await-modernisation/article30994732.ece

"With nearly 50 km of coastline, more than one lakh tonnes of fish catch annually, and dozens of fish markets supporting its economy, Ernakulam district has its life closely tied to the fortunes of the fisheries sector. Kochi is located in the heart of these activities and the city's fish markets, mostly in poor condition now, are looking to a new future, thanks to initiatives by the government. Champakkara market The Champakkara fish market, renowned for its brackish water fresh catch every morning, has come to define the city's fish-dominated food culture. Established around 1950, the market has been crying for modernisation for a long time now. It is estimated that around 25 tonnes of fish pass through its doors daily and around 500 people depend on it directly for their livelihood. The Kerala State Coastal Area Development Agency has prepared a draft plan for the development of the market for the Kochi Corporation. The draft modernisation plan, which was prepared about three months ago, was pending approval by the Kochi Corporation so that a detailed project report could be prepared, said an official. Metro project The extension of the Kochi metro rail service to Thripunithura and the expansion of the highway passing by the Champakkara market had seen the market space shrinking substantially, said P.P. Jayan, a long-time fish worker in the market. He said the promise of better facilities had been made long ago. B. Sunesh, a daily fish buyer, said Champakkara was part of Kochi's fish culture and the market called for an immediate revamp to bring it up to date with the growing culinary culture. The Coastal Area Development Agency plans include

acquisition of about 50 cents of land held by private owners to build the new facility that will include a two-storey market complex as well as spacious auction halls and fish stalls. Corporation councillor V.P. Chandran, who represents the area comprising the Champakkara market, said the Coastal Area Development Agency report was being looked at. However, he said the Kochi Corporation would not be in a position to implement the project on its own, considering the investment required. He hoped agencies such as Kochi Metro Rail Limited and the State government would come forward to support the establishment of a modern market. The draft DPR for the Champakkara market was prepared using Rs.5 lakh set aside by the Kochi Corporation in its last budget. A modern fish market and stalls with matching facilities will need substantial investments. The Coastal Area Development Agency is yet to make an estimate of the investments that will be needed. An area of 385 sq. metres as well as auction sheds are part of the plan for Champakkara. An official of the Coastal Area Development Agency also said that a ring road would be built to decongest the market, which now functions close to the proposed jetty for the Kochi Water Metro project. Mr. Chandran said the Kochi metro authorities had been asked to consider the smooth functioning of the Champakkara market while the water metro jetty was established on the northern side of the market. Varapuzha market The Varapuzha fish market is on equal footing with Champakkara market when it comes to its role in city life. The market, about 80 years old, handles around 10 tonnes of fish daily and more than a hundred fish vendors depend on it for their livelihood. The market is crying out for a revamp for a long time now though the Varapuzha panchayat has not been able to find sufficient funds to match its requirements. However, the panchayat will invest Rs.1 crore immediately to establish a waste treatment and biogas plant in the first phase of a modernisation plan. Valsala Balan, member of the panchayat, said a plastic shredding unit too was being established to take care of the problem of waste associated with the market. The biogas plant is expected to solve the problem of daily waste generation at the market. B.K. Mani, veteran fish trader, said the panchayat had not been able to generate enough funds to take care of the needs of the growing fish market. He claimed that the traders themselves had been investing in improving facilities. However, the situation was set to change, he said, with the growth of business and the growing importance of the market. Distribution centres The Champakkara and Varapuzha markets are crucial to the fishing economy of the district as they act also as distribution centres for other smaller markets in the district and even some markets outside Ernakulam. While fish caught off the coast of Munambam, Vypeen, Chellanam, Alappuzha and even Kozhikode arrive in Champakkara, the market is also the focus of fish business in markets in Idukki and Kottayam districts. Thodupuzha, Moovattupuzha and Ettumanoor are also catered to by the city markets. These markets are also central to the fish-eating culture where local catch is crucial. The markets sell 25 to 30 marine fish species, dominated by the local catch that include pearlspot, tilapia, catfish and shrimp from the backwaters as well as marine catch favourites such as mackeral, silver pomfret, oil sardines, seer fish and threadfin breams and anchovies. Thoppumpady hub While the Champakkara and

Varapuzha markets await a new birth, the Thoppumpady fish landing centre and auction centre are in for a big makeover as the Marine Products Export Development Authority has proposed modernising such facilities across India at a total investment of around Rs.2,500 crore. Upgrading and establishing facilities such as air-conditioned auction halls, cold storage and ensuring fresh water supply will involve an investment of up to Rs.100 crore. A detailed project report is expected to be ready this month. The Thoppumpady fish hub is at present run under the supervision of the Cochin Port Trust. The upgrade of the facility is being taken up in consultation with the stakeholders. B. Majeed of the Fisheries Harbour Coordination Committee welcomed the move and said that in terms of its importance, the Thoppumpady harbour figured at the top of the fisheries operations in Kochi. Special purpose vehicle According to the plans, a special purpose vehicle will be formed for the development of the fisheries market and harbour with an eye on the export market that will ultimately help substantially increase fishermen's earnings

Kerala: Low yields force large-scale migration of fishermen

https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/low-yields-force-large-scale-migration-of-kerala-fishermen

"Declining fish stock in the Kerala sea waters is forcing large-scale migration of fisher folk from the state's prominent fishing areas. The phenomenon has also affected the availability and price of fish, an essential part of the food culture of people in the state, putting family budgets under strain. Prices of most popular fish varieties have more than doubled. The fish stock problem began surfacing in the wake of the Ockhi cyclone, which ravaged the coastal areas of the state, changing the fishing eco-system. The cyclone's impact zone also saw large-scale disruption of employment for the fisher folk. Lack of employment and indebtedness caused by the disaster have forced the fishermen to leave the shores and seek employment in other countries. They have been mainly targeting West Asian countries of UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Iran, where they are exploited by unscrupulous agents and sponsors. The plight of the migrating fishermen was brought into focus over the week-end, when scores of fishermen from Kerala stranded in coronavirus virus-hit Iran sent an SOS message to the state government seeking its intervention in rescuing them. A video posted on the social media showed the fishermen confined to their room without food and other essential supplies due to the virus outbreak. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to Foreign Minister Dr S Jaishankar asking for central help for their rescue. State authorities said they were also seeking the help of NORKA, the government organisation looking after the welfare of overseas workers from Kerala, to secure their safe return. Family members of the affected fishermen have claimed that their sponsors have failed to provide the stranded men with food and other supplies and shirking their responsibility as their employers. Reports suggest that the sponsors have refused the fishermen permission to leave, claiming that they owe money in terms of visa

charges and other fees. All the stranded people are from Thiruvananthapuram district, which bore the brunt of the Ockhi storm. At least a 100 people from the area have gone to places like Iran and UAE with work permits issued by local companies there. The fishermen reportedly suffer exploitation at the hands of these companies, as they are not provided even regular salaries. The workers have to fend for themselves from the cost of the catch on the fishing boats after paying the owners their fixed costs. This often leaves the workers with little money. The state government has been trying to restore the ecological balance along the coast, by increasing the fish stock and undertaking other developmental initiatives in the area. But these have not produced the desired results, forcing the traditional fishing workers to seek other forms of gainful employment.

Kerala and Tamil Nadu: Fishermen stranded in coronavirus-hit Iran facing eviction threat from employer

https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2020/mar/03/fishermen-stranded-in-coronavirus-hit-iran-facing-eviction-threat-from-employer-2111295.html

"The fishermen stranded in Iran in the wake of the COVID-19 virus scare are facing threat of eviction from their accommodation from their employer. Among those facing eviction are fishermen from Pozhiyoor, a coastal village in Thiruvananthapuram. Their families back home were informed that water connection to their buildings have been discontinued. “The sponsor is demanding back the money spent on their visas to return the passports. They have food for just two more days, said James Netto, father of Jagajeevan, one of the fishermen stranded in Iran. Arul Das, another fisherman in the group, sent a video message complaining that the sponsor threatened to confiscate their mobile phones provided to them by the employer. He said the embassy officers contacted them, however they made no promises from their part. The fishermen community in Pozhiyoor approached Shashi Tharoor, MP, to demand his intervention. “The MP's office said a clear picture regarding evacuation can only be ascertained by Wednesday, said James. The group comprised 23 fishermen, of which 17 belong to the fishing villages of Thiruvananthapuram. They are lodged in a coastal area of Asaluyeh at Bushehr province in Iran. According to official estimates, there are many such groups, including over 60 fishermen from the state, hundreds from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, who have been affected. They had gone to Iran on fishermen visa four months ago. The fishermen were asked to remain indoor as part of Iran's effort to curb the spread of the virus, which claimed over 200 lives. Iran is the worst-affected by the global pandemic after China. The chief ministers of Kerala and Tamil Nadu had written to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar demanding his intervention. The minister had tweeted that the External Affairs Ministry was collaborating with Iran to set up a screening process for the safe return of Indians. Dhamu Gaddam, Indian Ambassador to Iran, tweeted that the officials of the Indian consulate in Bandar Abbas were meeting the stranded fishermen on Tuesday. More groups affected

According to official estimates, there are many such groups, including over 60 fishermen from the state, hundreds from Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, who have been affected. They had gone to Iran on fishermen visa four months ago.

“Bring us back”: SOS video from Kerala fishermen in coronavirus-hit Iran

https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/sos-video-from-kerala-fishermen-in-coronavirus-hit-iran-bring-us-back-2188171

"Around 60 fishermen from the south Indian state of Kerala are stranded in Iran due to the coronavirus spread in the country. They remain confined to their rooms with very little access to food and water."We are stranded at Azalur in Iran. Due to the outbreak of coronavirus in this country, we are confined to our rooms and cannot leave,"" a man, says in an SOS video on social media, as he pans around to show around 21 fishermen standing in a room. ""There are other people also who have been stranded in nearby rooms but we are not able to contact them... There are many Indians working in different parts of Iran and are now stranded with hardly any food or water,"" another fisherman says in the video."We appeal to the Indian central government to take us back to our families. We appeal to all prominent leaders in the country. All the flights from Iran to India have been suspended and that has affected us severely,"" the fisherman adds. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has written to Foreign Minister Dr S Jaishankar saying hundreds of Indian fishermen are trapped in Iran's Azalur - of which around 60 are from Kerala."It is learnt that they are unable to return on account of COVID 19 spread. In this circumstance, I request you to direct the embassy officials to take necessary steps and arrange for the safe return of these person,"" Mr Vijayan wrote in his letter. Congress leader and Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor has also written to Mr Jaishankar, saying, ""The stranded fishermen in Iran, many of whom are from Kerala, have legally secured work permits and have been hired by local fishing companies to work in the country"". Asking the government to utilise all channels of communication to establish contact with the affected groups and to ensure timely updates to worrying families, Mr Tharoor said, ""This situation has developed overnight as part of the larger quarantine and containment measures by the Iranian administration... The plight of our fishermen warrants immediate attention"".

Kerala’s budget offers big opportunity for aquaculture: FreshToHome

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/budget-offers-big-opportunity-for-aquaculture-freshtohome/article30920688.ece

"States with adequate land resources will particularly make gains, says online fresh fish vendor. The fisheries sector considers Budget 2020-21, with its target of increasing fish

production from the present 140 lakh tonnes to 200 lakh tonnes by 2022, a significant one. If anything, it reflects a disquiet about the dwindling yields and the need for tapping alternative sources, aquaculture in particular, says Mathew Joseph, Chief Operating Officer of FreshToHome, the country's largest online fresh fish vendor, and a leading exporter. Aquaculture, need of the hour The need for a thorough relook at aquaculture has never been more felt than now, said Joseph, who has spent more than 30 years reading the seawind and pulse of the fisherfolk. The size of the domestic fish market is a staggering $50 billion (either matching or exceeding the Hollywood movie industry) and the demand is so high that the depleting catch has failed it badly, he added. This is a golden opportunity for States such as Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, with adequate land resources, to promote aquaculture, Joseph told BusinessLine. “The litmus test lies in implementation on ground of a purposeful aquaculture policy, national or sub-national. The prospects are bright in States where aquaculture is already being carried out over large tracts, he added. Kerala, with limited availability of land, may have priced itself out of the game. Coronavirus impact on exports Speaking about the coronavirus impact on his export business, Joseph said FreshToHome did not take a direct hit. But a few varieties in the export basket suffered, especially live crab. Most exports from here as well as Chennai are directed to Singapore, to be re-exported to China, the largest consumer. For instance, live crab prices had come down from ?1,200 per kg to ?700 within the first week of the virus outbreak. Another was vannamei shrimp, a good portion of which also goes to China. The third one was ribbon fish, 100 per cent of which goes to that country. Volumes may not have suffered as much as the foreign exchange foregone. The idea is to fight this trend by going in for value-added items, explained Shan Kadavil, Chief Executive Officer, FreshToHome, and a serial entrepreneur. Joseph agreed, pointing to the case of baasa fish fillets. All of the baasa catch is sourced from Vietnam, which bleaches the fish white before sending it out. The mindless use of chemicals is something that FreshToHome is fighting tooth and nail (and therefore the high acceptance in the domestic market), Kadavil said. Baasa farms in Kerala, Karnataka According to Joseph, last year, India imported 504 containers of baasa fillets from Vietnam. This requires contracting at least 1,500 containers of whole baasa fish since the average yield is only 25-30 per cent. This means that 1,500 tonnes of chemically-treated baasa whole fish was imported. FreshToHome has already begun baasa farming in Kerala and Karnataka. “In Kerala, we joined with baaza farmers, forming a cooperative society, and set up a 40-acre farm at Ambalappuzha in Alappuzha district three months ago, said Joseph. The crop will be ready in six months. The baasa fish seeds were sourced from Andhra Pradesh. “In order to make up for the loss in export gains, we will cut the whole fish into just meat, fillet (strip), or marinated products...to basically raise the percentage of those products in our export basket, said Kadavil. Tech changes business model Fish accounts for 70 per cent of FreshToHome's business. According to the company, it was the first start-up to bring fresh fish online. It was also the first company in the world to bring raw fish online and has since turned number one in the UAE. “FreshToHome is what it is today only

because of the introduction of technology into a traditional business model, courtesy my CEO Shan, said Joseph. In fact, the pioneering technology sources meat and fish directly from livestock farmers and fishermen to supply them at mass market prices by essentially cutting out middlemen. Onboarding of fishermen has also greatly helped the cause of building a cold chain, its most essential link, and cut down the time taken to push the day's catch to the whole of South India from three days to just 24 hours, Kadavil said. His team created an Android app, which features pictures with which the fisherman and livestock farmers can bid the price at which they intend to sell their stock. Then the system generates a purchase order, as if on a virtual trading commodities exchange. After this, FreshToHome sends its trucks across to lift the fish and meat at source, which falls within a radius of 100 km.

Kerala's fishers demand open market kerosene sale

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/fishers-demand-open-market-kerosene-sale/article30914980.ece

"Fishers have demanded that the State government intervene to make non-subsidised kerosene available in the open market at affordable price to curb their exploitation by unscrupulous elements. Demand for kerosene in the open market for fishing activities has gone up against the background of a sharp fall in the supply of subsidised kerosene. The shortage in the market is exploited by elements that corner public supplies to sell the commodity at a premium to fishermen who are badly in need of the fuel, said Charles George of Matsya Thozhilai Aikyavedi. To end this practice, fishers raised the demand that kerosene be made available in the open market by a government agency, which can also fix the points of sale so that fishermen are not exploited. The demand was raised at a meeting of fishers' unions last week with Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma and the government had taken the suggestion positively, Mr. Charles said. Sources in the apex fisheries cooperative, Matsyafed, said that with marine fisheries passing through a near-fish-drought, kerosene offtake had slowed down to some extent. Mr. Charles reiterated that the unprecedented fall in catch, especially of pelagic varieties like anchovies, Indian mackerel and oil sardines, called for a package for the fishermen who were now in dire straits. Even if the government was not ready to come out with a financial package for the fishing community, it should at least make sure that affordable kerosene was made available, he said. Around 38,000 fishing engines in the State required kerosene for their operations. Matsyafed has been supplying up to 140 litres of subsidised kerosene a month to engines of up to 10 HP. Engines with power ranging between 10 HP and 15 HP are provided with 1,508 litres and engines up to 40 HP are given with 190 litres monthly. Meanwhile, the Fisheries Department has fixed March 15 as the date for verification of the boats and fishing vessels that require subsidised kerosene supply. There are around 200 boats that are eligible for subsidised kerosene in the district. However, only 100 to 150 have been availing the fuel due to the sharp fall in fish catch in recent months.

Dip in catch hits livelihood of Kerala fisherwomen

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/dip-in-catch-hits-livelihood-of-kerala-fisherwomen/article30916646.ece

"Pauline, a 55-year-old fisherwoman from Kappil, has been returning with an empty basket from the Neendakara harbour for the past four days. The boat that had been supplying fish to small-scale vendors remains anchored on the shore after multiple futile trips last week. The dip in marine stock, especially pelagic fish, has put the livelihood of thousands of fisherwomen in the State in jeopardy. The women, many of them above the age of 50, say they are facing an unprecedented crisis. “Many varieties abundant some 10 years ago have vanished completely and it is for the first time I am witnessing such a famine-like situation. Women working in small processing units are also in dire straits, she says. Matsyafed operates special bus services for them to fish-landing centres and of late the majority of them are taking the trip in vain. “Today there are 33 women from Thiruvananthapuram on the bus, but only a few got lucky with some anchovy. I have been selling fish for the past 30 years. At this age, it is not possible to start another trade, says Jenet Cleetus, who is also the Thiruvananthapuram district secretary of the Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation. The main reason for this alarming dip in catch, she adds, is illegal and unscientific methods of fishing, including night trawling. Primary earners In many families, these women are the primary earners and returning with no fish has made their lives miserable. “Though the boats are bringing hardly any catch, cheap formalin-laced fish from other States are available in the market. As a result, good fish has become dear and often we are not able to afford it. We used to get a basket of mackerel for ?2,000 early, but now the price has gone up to ?8,000, says Mable Rymond, president, Theeradesha Mahilavedi. Though the Theeramythri programme of the Society for Assistance to Fisherwomen (SAF) has been offering the women alternative options for self-employment, it could not reach out to many, mainly the elderly. “We are aware of the depletion in fish stock and this financial year we have formed groups mainly focussing on women engaged in fish vending. Around 50,000 women work in the sector and currently we have over 5,000 beneficiaries. At present we do not have any large-scale project, but in future we may be able to assist more, says Sreelu N.S, Executive Director, SAF.

Kerala: Will request Centre to relax CRZ rules

https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/will-request-centre-to-relax-crz-rules/articleshow/74071187.cms

"Industries minister E P Jayarajan told the assembly on Monday that the state government

will approach the Centre seeking temporary relaxations in Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules which might adversely affect the life of fishing community till the state gets its coastal zone management plan (CZMP) approved by the Centre. The minister also said that the government will not initiate any measures which will adversely affect people dwelling in the coastal belt, 'especially at a time when the government is implementing the Life Mission project, under which houses are being constructed for homeless fishermen'. He was responding to a calling attention motion by MLA T J Vinod, who pointed out that the government had failed to meet the six-month deadline for getting the central government's approval for the state's new CZMP as per the CRZ notification 2019. Jayarajan said that the government had already entrusted the National Centre for Earth Science Studies to prepare the CZMP, taking into account of the special situation in the state.

Fish workers' organisations in Kerala have demanded government to provide immediate financial assistance to fishermen

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/74165966.cms?

"Fish workers' organisations have demanded the state government to provide immediate financial assistance to fishermen "as they were struggling to make ends meet due to poor catch in the sector. "Various factors, including climate change, unscientific trawling near to the shore and pair trawling, have led to the reduction of our fish production. Fishermen are now in a state of poverty, said a joint statement issued by Kerala Swathanthra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) state president Jackson Pollayil and National Fish Workers' Forum general secretary T Peter, here on Friday. They said fishing with powerful LED lights, making use of power generators, was also affecting the marine wealth. The government, it demanded, should take immediate measures to confiscate vessels involved in juvenile fishing and vehicles transporting the catch to factories, and to cancel their permits. "If the government fails to keep vigil on the matter, fish will vanish from our dining tables and the fishing community will plunge into extreme poverty, the statement said.

National Fishworkers' Forum asks Kerala government to act against illegal fishing practices

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/thiruvananthapuram/2020/feb/17/national-fishworkers-forum-asks-kerala-government-to-act-against-illegal-fishing-practices-2104351.html

"The National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) demanded the government to curb illegal methods of fishing in shallow sea using LED lights. According to them, unsustainable fishing practices followed by trawlers had affected the livelihood of traditional fishermen who depend on the shallow sea. "The use of LED lights powered by generators has become rampant near

the coast by boat operators. They have flouted all restrictions on night trawling, said general secretary of NFF T Peter. He said trawlers were involved in illegal practices such as pair trawling and bull trawling that resulted in the netting of juvenile fish. "The juvenile fishes are carried to the fish meal factories located in Kozhikode, Mangaluru and Muttam. But the practice resulted in depletion of fish wealth, said general secretary of Kerala Swatantra Matsyathozhilali Federation (KSMTF) Jackson Pollayil. He demanded the government to take stringent action by seizing boats involved in illegal fishing methods at the harbor and fish landing centres. The department has brought out a list of minimum legal size (MLS) for 58 species which can be netted based on the recommendation of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI). The enforcement officers can seize the catch, destroy it and impose a fine of Rs 2.5 lakh on boats if they are carrying juvenile fishes that do not meet the MLS.

The eroding shorelines of Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/blink/cover/coastline-erosion-in-keralas-capital/article30818347.ece

"Thiruvananthapuram's Shanghumugham Beach is shrinking by the day, as the sea is continually pressed inland by a combination of climate-related and man-made causes. On weekends, there is hardly any elbow room on Shanghumugham Beach in Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram. The smell of roasted corn hangs in the air, vendors mill around the walkway that leads to the beach, families lounge around a 35m-long sculpture of a reclining naked woman 'Jalakanyaka' by Kanaayi Kunhiraman that seems to strain against Kerala's conservative ethos yet has come to be one of the most recognised landmarks in the city. It is a familiar beach scene. The only problem is there isn't much beach left. "Every year, I feel the sea is drawing closer, says Indu, a 44-year-old Thiruvananthapuram resident who has been coming to Shanghumugham since her childhood. "The beach is so much smaller than it used to be. We would come here to get away from the congestion in the city, and now look how congested the beach has become. She points to a row of fishing boats lined up along a part of the shore usually reserved for people. The boats were moved after vast tracts of the Shangumugham shoreline were eroded following Cyclone Ockhi, which hit the Kerala coast in December 2017. A nearby road, which runs parallel to the beach, bears testimony to Ockhi's fury rope and traffic cones cordon off the traffic from long sections of the road that were washed away by the waves. Even now, the waves are visibly rough but they do not deter visitors. Beach-goers play a game of racing back to the shore before the water reaches their ankles, laughing aloud when the wave beats them to it. Others try to venture into the water, holding hands with their friends but lose balance when the wave pulls back into the sea. The whistles of coastguards pierce the air, instructing the crowds to move away from the water. Families with toddlers are turned away from the water. Standing under a wide umbrella,

Shishupal, a coast guard, watches his colleague admonish youngsters taking selfies with their backs to the waves. “Earlier, we would merely look on as people played and swam since the sea is quieter at this time of the year, but now we must strictly prevent them from going into the water, he says. “We can't trust the waves anymore. After the [2004] tsunami and Ockhi, we rarely see the sea calm. Shishupal has been working as a coast guard since the early '90s and remembers how he would have to walk for about a kilometre to reach the sea in Shanghumugham. Since then, he notes that both the height and force of the waves have increased, not just during the monsoon months of June to September, when the sea is usually rough, but all through the year. “It's getting harder to predict how the sea will behave, he says. Part of the notion of Kerala being ‘god's own country' is drawn from the abundance of its water resources. Bordered by the Arabian Sea on the west, Kerala has 44 rivers, 34 lakes, scenic lagoons, mangroves and estuarine wetlands, and also receives heavy rain during the monsoons. But having been battered by severe floods in 2018 and 2019, the state's relationship with water is fast changing. An article titled ‘Impact of sea level rise and coastal slope on shoreline change along the Indian coast', published in 2017 in the international journal Natural Hazards, noted that the highest level of coastal erosion was observed in West Bengal. Kerala was a close second. Other studies have observed that the western coast of India was mostly stable, except for Kerala's coastline. Of Kerala's 590-km coastline, 63 per cent faces sea erosion. The enforcement of the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification is lax. Among nine districts observed to be affected by sea erosion in Kerala, the maximum (23 per cent) has been reported in Thiruvananthapuram. The state capital has a 35-km coastline, and is one of the densest districts in terms of population factors that exacerbate the vulnerability of its people at the time of a natural disaster. Cyclone Ockhi, for instance, threw into sharp relief the dangers faced by populous settlements along the coast. Houses and other buildings were washed away in areas such as Valiyathura and Shanghumugham, and families identified as vulnerable were offered ?10 lakh by the state to relocate to safer areas. But many are loath to leave the coast. “What kind of land will you get these days with ?10 lakh in this city? Will it cover the cost of building a house? Who will pay for my transport back and forth from the shore? asks Gilbert (59), a grizzled fisherman who lives further up the coast in Shanghumugham. His house faces the sea, separated from the beach by a narrow road. “Why are you coming now, when the sea is safe? Come in June and see what we have to live with. His neighbour comes out of her house on hearing Gilbert's raised voice. She squints and points to a boat in the distance. “That's where the sea would begin, she says. “You'd have to walk that far to get to the sea. Gilbert also remembers the beach being a vaster expanse. “During the '80s, there would be swathes of anchovies, sardines and other small fish drying under the sun. We would have dinner and lie down to sleep on the shore, he recalls. “Now there are hardly any fish to catch, let alone to dry. And the sea is knocking at our doors. He attributes the recent disturbances in the sea to the Vizhinjam International Seaport, which is currently under construction. The port is located about 18km further south from Shanghumugham beach. “Ever since the harbour came up, the

waves have become rougher. Because of the breakwater in the harbour, the waves have nowhere to go and are hitting us harder. A nearly 310km stretch (close to 60 per cent) of Kerala's coastline has been protected by seawalls, groynes and offshore breakwaters. Experts have long maintained that fortifications of this kind affect the flow of the currents around the shore, resulting in the intensification of waves to the north of the breakwater and subsequent erosion of that shoreline. But the residents insist that fortifications are the only way they can save their homes. Gilbert points to a mark on the wall of his house, about a metre from the ground. “Last monsoon, the waters rose and came into my house till here. We told the government to put in seawalls but they said they didn't have money. Sacks of absorbent clay are lined up along the road in front of his house. “We have to make do with this instead of a seawall, but the only thing protecting us are our prayers. On the Observatory Hills opposite the Kanakakunnu Palace, where the office of the Kerala State Disaster Management Authority is located, Sekhar L Kuriakose, member secretary, clarifies that what is happening in Shanghumugham is not representative of what is occurring elsewhere along Kerala's coastline which is beset by issues of rampant coastal regulation violations, destruction of adjoining wetlands and sea surges. “The erosion and accretion process is a cyclical one. Shanghumugham's shore will erode as well as build up eventually. I wouldn't call it a classic example of climatic variation, he says. “Shanghumugham is an interplay between whatever is happening in terms of changes in the Arabian Sea, in terms of temperature regimes, wind patterns and the different anthropogenic factors such as the Vizhinjam harbour, increased built-up area along the coastline, and so on, he notes. The average temperature in the Arabian Sea seems to be rising, he adds. Recent studies have attributed the rise in temperature to the rapid warming of the Indian Ocean, among other climate change signals, but the root cause of the rapid warming remains unclear. “If the temperature is increasing, it means the air will have more moisture and the sea will have more wind, and this manifests as rough waves, he says. Recent studies also note an increase in wind velocity and wind-related disasters across the coast. “Our construction practices are not wind-resilient, so we've been getting a lot of cases of rooftops being blown away and electric poles and trees falling on houses, he says. He also adds that fish stocks have been dropping because of overfishing, degradation of marine environment, ocean warming and so on. As a result, fishermen are forced to go into deeper seas, adding another layer of vulnerability to a population at risk. Even during Cyclone Ockhi, what began as a depression in the Arabian Sea quickly changed course and became a cyclonic storm, hitting the Kerala coast without warning. Fishermen who had already set out for the sea couldn't be notified in advance. Even now, families in Valiyathura wait for news from their kin who went missing at sea back then. Other experts have pointed out that seawalls and breakwaters interrupt the accretion of sediments along the coast, thereby preventing the coast from being replenished. Moreover, the intensive quarrying for rocks needed for such structures contributed to the denudation of hillsides in the Western Ghats, leading to an unprecedented number of landslides in Kerala's hilly districts such as Wayanad and Idukki during the floods of 2018.

Furthermore, the dams in Kerala's rivers that drain into the Arabian Sea have been faulted with preventing the flow of sediments to the coast. The picture that emerges of Kerala's many-layered vulnerabilities is dire. Studies suggest that the sea level may rise by 15-38cm in Kerala by mid-21st century. “From a disaster manager's perspective, it's more like a cautionary note on a cigarette packet, Kuriakose reflects. “We're aware of the dangers. And we now know yet another cause for the danger. Back on the shore, Gilbert leans against a sack of clay and shrugs. “This beach is my home. The sea is my livelihood, he says. “I'm not going anywhere.

Tamil Nadu and Kerala: IIT-Madras develops eco-friendly alternative to seawalls

https://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/110220/iit-madras-develops-eco-friendly-alternative-to-seawalls.html

"After successfully testing the efficacy of the technology of groyne fields since 2007 along the Kerala and North Chennai coastline to fight sea erosion, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has developed an eco-friendly system using geotextiles to save seashore. The system, geotextile-wrapped over geo cell, developed with the fund offered by the Kerala government, has reached the final stage, Dr. V. Sundar, professor, department of ocean engineering, IIT-M told this newspaper. “We hope we would be able to introduce it on the ground in a year. “The system works with a dual structure: one is the geotube that will be laid on the updrift side and the second, a geo textile structure that replaces the conventional seawall in the down drift side, Dr Sundar said. “The geotube will act as a shock absorber by reducing the power of the waves. Ultimately, the system brings down the power of the high waves during the monsoon season that would cause sever damages to the life and property of coastal people. He said the IIT team pursued the project after Kerala government accepted its proposal a couple of years ago and the allocated the fund for the same. “We are is waiting for the release of the final instalment of the fund from the Kerala government to test the technology on the ground. The system is eco-friendly and cost effective compared to conventional rocky seawalls, he said. “The sizable boulders are unavailable and that was why we thought about the geo textiles, he said. “Geotextiles are strong enough to withstand the pressure of waves. It's the real alternate for the rocky seawalls. It may be recalled that the IITM team, under Dr. Sundar, has successfully tested groyne field technology laying down as many as 25 structures in as many as 20 shorelines in Kerala since 2007. “We are satisfied with the performance and it helped save many villages in Kerala. The unavailability of boulders is the major challenge in going ahead with that technology. Therefore we were forced to look for the alternative, he said. According to Dr Sundar, IITM has done a review study on the implemented groyne fields in the coast of Kerala in around 20 locations. “Based on a detailed review, it is found that groyne fields in 12 out of the 20 locations are in good state and functioning very effectively and have recovered lot of beaches. Though the remaining fields are comparatively less effective in

recovering beach, they have controlled erosion to an acceptable limit, he pointed out.

Kerala: New microbiology lab in Kochi to boost quality of seafood exports

https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/kochi/2020/feb/10/new-microbiology-lab-in-kochi-to-boost-quality-of-seafood-exports-2101269.html

"India's efforts to achieve its ambitious goal of taking seafood exports to the next level got a major push on Sunday after the Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) inaugurated its state-of-the-art microbiology laboratory at its headquarters here. This is MPEDA's first such laboratory in Kerala. Unveiling the laboratory, Union Minister of State for Food Processing Industries Rameswar Teli said it will help the seafood sector in overcoming the stiff competition in the global export market, particularly on the quality front. MPEDA chairman K S Srinivas said the laboratory would be used to test all types of seafood at various stages, including during production and prior to export, to avoid any bacterial presence in seafood. “It will ensure that exporters do not face rejection of their products by any country on the grounds of substandard quality, he said. The laboratory was necessitated by the fact that the US, the European Union and other major seafood importers were tightening quality norms on a regular basis in the interest of their citizens' health. Teli expressed hope that all other sectors under the food processing industry would go for such a laboratory to ensure quality and give a fillip to exports. MPEDA unveiled the laboratory on the third and final day of the 22nd India International Seafood Show. MPEDA secretary B Sreekumar said the authority took just one year to set up the new lab from the conception stage. Other microbiology laboratories in India are at Bhimavaram and Nellore (Andhra Pradesh) and Bhubaneswar (Odisha). India International Seafood Show ends; 2022 summit in Kolkata Kochi: The 22nd India International Seafood Show concluded here on Sunday, showcasing latest technological interventions in aquaculture and deliberating on subjects that could give a fillip to the sector ahead of the summit in Kolkata in 2022. K S Srinivas, chairman of Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA), the organisers, said the brainstorming sessions boosted India's aquafarming. On MPEDA's proposal to renovate 25 fishing harbours in India, he said the plan was to start the D2,500-crore project by upgrading the ones at Thoppumpady here and Nizampatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

Kerala: Thoppumpady harbour in for a Rs.100-crore makeover

https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/thoppumpady-harbour-in-for-a-100-crore-makeover/article30756477.ece

"Kochi's landmark Thoppumpady fishing harbour is in for a massive makeover, with the

Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) proposing to modernise 25 fishing harbours across India at a total cost of around Rs.2,500 crore. MPEDA Chairman K.S. Srinivas told The Hindu here on Thursday that Thoppumpady and Nizampatnam in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh would be developed into harbours of international standards in the first phase of the modernisation programme. A detailed project report for the Thoppumpady harbour modernisation is expected to be ready in a month. The other DPRs will follow. The Union Government has given due importance to the proposal for fishing harbour modernisation, Mr. Srinivas said. Modernising the harbours will cost approximately Rs.100 crore each, he added. A special purpose vehicle (SPV) will be formed to develop each harbour, and the investments will pay dividend in the form of higher price for the catch, ensuring better income for fishermen. The modernisation of 25 fishing harbours in the first phase will take care of around 50% of marine wild catch in the country. The proposal for modernisation was occasioned by the visibly poor condition of harbours across the country. “The first mile connectivity is poor, the MPEDA chief said, adding that wild catch fetched around $3.5 a kg in India, while in neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, where fishing harbour conditions were of higher standards, it was five to six dollars a kilogram. A modernised fishing harbour will have cold storage facility, air conditioned auction hall, space for grading and sorting of fish as well as facility for basic processing. There are no fishing harbours in the country with such facilities now. The Thoppumpady harbour is the base for around 600 gill net boats, nearly a hundred purse seine boats, over 400 fishing boats as well as a number of traditional fishing boats. The harbour is under the control of the Cochin Port Trust, and the Cochin Fisheries Harbour Coordination Committee, a forum of stakeholders, manages its day-to-day affairs. Meanwhile, Cochin Fisheries Harbour Coordination Committee general secretary M. Majeed welcomed the move to modernise the facility. He said the 40-year-old fishing harbour badly required infrastructure facilities. Major fishing harbours or landing centres in Kerala include Munambam, Puthiyappa, Sakthikulangara, Beypore, Azheekkal, and Thottappilli. Capture fisheries account for almost 70% of the quantity of marine food exported from India in volume and a little over 45% in earnings. India exported 13.92 lakh tonnes of seafood during 2018-19, earning $6.73 billion.

Kerala: Juvenile catch may prove catastrophic for fishers

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/juvenile-catch-may-prove-catastrophic-for-fishers/article30730066.ece

"While natural fish stocks continue to fall due to various reasons, the fisheries sector in

Kerala is facing another serious threat -- targeted juvenile catch to meet the growing demand for fish meal. Unlike the surplus by-catch that went to the fish meal fish oil (FMFO) industries earlier, now shoals of edible juveniles are caught and dispatched to plants located outside Kerala. Huge volumes of edible varieties, including sardine and pink perch, are now found in the consignments -- a practice that can be catastrophic to the marine environment and livelihood of fishers. Decline "Many of the boats now supply fish below the minimum legal size to the FMFOs as they pay well. Compared to previous years there has been a noticeable decline in catch and now many boats come back with whatever they get. The factory agents take all varieties and many days that's our only income, says Salim, a fisher. With the growth of aquafeed market, catering to FMFOs has become a more lucrative option and the consignments from Kerala mainly go to plants in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Goa. "Currently a small crate to the factories will fetch you around ?1,000, which is more profitable than selling it to small-scale vendors. Earlier their rates were not so high and suddenly everybody is doing business with them. Fishers who have been struggling with low catch and loss of working days are counting this as an opportunity. They say this will take care of their fuel expense at least, says Mariam, a fish vendor. Standard rate Since the industry offers a standard rate for a crate irrespective of the kind of fish, the species will change according to availability from juvenile pelagics to many others. "You don't have to go in search of shoals or wait for long. You can come back with whatever you get and sell it to the agent, says Jackson, a fisherman. Very often the juvenile catch is not brought to the harbour since the transaction takes place in the sea. "The crafts inform the agents and they go to the sea with carrier boats to offload the catch. Several crates are taken to the waiting trucks and these agents arrange everything. Sometimes there will be hardly any fish left for auctioning, he adds. According to experts and elderly fishermen, the dangerous practice will lead to extinction, not depletion. "If they are opting to supply varieties with low market value to the factories, it is their choice. But targeting juveniles will lead to a total collapse in the stock and affect the marine ecosystem. They point out the huge inflow from other sectors and the consequent lack of awareness as main reasons for the practice.

Kerala: State minister urges fisheries sector to pay more attention to social issues

https://www.seafoodsource.com/news/environment-sustainability/indian-state-minister-urges-fisheries-sector-to-pay-more-attention-to-social-issues

"The fisheries minister of India's southern state of Kerala is calling on the region's fisheries sector to push its sustainable development toward serving people. During the third international symposium on marine ecosystems, held at India's Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFR), J Mercykutty Amma said fisheries management should focus on environmental, economic, and social factors with equal importance. The sector should not be limited only on conservation of resources and the environment, but should play a more important role in ensuring the livelihoods of billions of people. "In addition to aiming at ending

poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, the sustainable development should ensure universal access to health care to all with major emphasis on gender issues. It should also ensure the elimination of all forms of inequality everywhere, she said. According to the minister, it is important to reduce pressure on ocean resources, especially the anthropogenic activities that have taken a heavy toll on ocean health. Protection of key habitats and sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture are vital to restore the productivity of the ocean. Mercykutty Amma added that restoring the productivity of the ocean would help ensure future growth, food security, and jobs for coastal communities. The minister said that the state government has begun promoting the concept of co-management in fisheries by setting up management societies at harbors and at fishing villages. "The government took a series of measures to ensure sustainable development of the marine fisheries sector in consultation with the scientific community. The measures, including implementation of a minimum legal size, regulation of engine power of fishing crafts and regulation of size of fishing crafts have had positive impacts on resources, the minister said. The third international symposium on marine ecosystems, which concluded 10 January, was organized by the Marine Biological Association of India (MBAI). The conference came up with a road map to deal with the issues being faced by marine ecosystems. Guidelines and proposals for proper management of marine fisheries included in the road map could become a guide for policy makers for the next three years. On top priority of the recommendations, marine scientists have called for a complete ban on trawling in India's territorial waters within 12 nautical miles. These areas should be demarcated as exclusive zone for small-scale fishermen, they said. The symposium also demanded that India's Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 be reformed in a way that would make it effective in conservation of marine species of the country. Considering the importance of community-based management of traditional fishers, the conference suggested that community participation should strictly be ensured while implementing the co-management in marine fisheries. At a time when conditions for commercial fishing undergo drastic changes – owing to the climate crisis, marine pollution, coastal development and overexploitation – more sustainable fish-capture technologies have to be developed. Automation and digitization should be incorporated in fisheries technology used in the country's fishing sector, they said.

Kerala: Decline in sardine catch affects small scale fishers: study

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/decline-in-sardine-catch-affects-small-scale-fishers-study/article30534420.ece

"Small-scale fishers in Kerala have suffered a huge economic loss owing to the decline in

catch of oil sardine, said a study, indicating the depth of the crisis existing the marine fisheries sector of the State. “Following the decrease of oil sardine, the livelihood security of small-scale fisher-folk in the outboard ring seine category were much affected with more than 50 per cent of the fishing efforts were reducing since 2014, said CMFRI Senior Scientist N Aswathy while presenting the findings at a symposium. This caused shooting up of unemployment in the coastal villages. The findings of the study carried out by the researchers in Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was presented at the international symposium on marine ecosystems held at the CMFRI here. Due to the dwindling catch, the average sardine price rose from Rs 47 to Rs 120 in retail markets. Even as the fish price increased, the gross value of sardine was decreased from Rs 1219 crore to Rs 925 crore at retail level. The average net returns of outboard ring seiners were considerably reduced from Rs 12,000 per fishing trip to Rs 2500 during 2014-18. During this period, the oil sardine landings in Kerala declined from 2.5 lakh tonnes to 77,000 tonnes, recording an annual average decline of 19.82 per cent, she said. A record catch of nearly four lakh tonnes of oil sardine was registered in the State in 2012, but gradual decrease was recorded in the landings during the following years. Even though a slight increase was recorded in 2017 compared to the previous year, the sardine catch went down to 77,093 tonne in 2018

Kerala: Fishers’ fight for livelihood ends on a happy note

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fishers-fight-for-livelihood-ends-on-a-happy-note/article30538176.ece

"Their stake nets were dislodged for construction of resort. The family of Sailan A.K. was among several fishers who made a living by fishing with stake nets close to Nediyathuruthu island in Vembanad Lake till 2007. In 2007, the 11.5-acre island was bought by Kapico Kerala Resorts Private Limited. It soon started constructing villas there. The project, however, changed the life of fisher families in the area after 13 licensed stake nets were removed for the construction of the resort. “We used to fish using stake nets near Nediyathuruthu island before the construction of the resort. For several decades, it was our main source of income. We lost our livelihood after the nets were dislodged. We are delighted our fight against the illegal resort ended on a happy note, says Mr. Sailan. After the families lost their livelihood, K.R. Ratheesh, a relative of Sailan, moved the Cherthala munsif court in 2008, demanding that the villas constructed in violation of the Coastal Zone Regulation (CRZ) Act on the island be demolished. The petition also sought damages and restoration of nets. However, the court dismissed the petition. After the Cherthala sub-court issued a stop-memo to Kapico in 2010, the legal battle soon reached the Kerala High Court. In the meantime, the Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi and others impleaded in the case. The rest is history. First, the High Court ordered the demolition in 2013. On Friday, the Supreme Court upheld the High Court verdict. Historical verdict The apex court verdict is seen as a major victory for the

fishing community and a strong message against constructing structures violating the CRZ and other norms. Charles George, president, Kerala Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedi (TUCI), termed the Supreme Court order a historical verdict. “It was a case of justice delayed but not denied. Kapico constructed the resort blatantly violating existing rules. It filled paddy fields and the lake for the construction of villas and other structures. They had colluded with bureaucracy and politicians to materialise the project, Mr. George said. Order welcomed Panavally grama panchayat authorities have welcomed the order. “We welcome the apex court order. Illegal constructions should go. But, we do not have the finance and expertise to demolish the resort. A decision on how to go ahead and implement the order will be taken after discussing the matter with the authorities concerned, said Pradeep Koodaikkal, president, Panavally grama panchayat. Officials with the Alappuzha district administration said that they would initiate further action after receiving the apex court order.

Kerala: Fisheries Minister calls for holistic approach to develop the sector

https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/fisheries-minister-calls-for-holistic-approach-to-develop-the-sector/article30521966.ece

"Sustainable development of marine fisheries sector should not be limited only on conservation of resources and the environment, instead it should follow a holistic approach by giving greater importance on the role of fisheries as sources of livelihood, said Fisheries Minister J Mercykuttyamma. Recognition of the social agency, well-being and livelihoods of people working in the sector is equally important in marine fisheries, she added. The minister was addressing delegates at the third international symposium on marine ecosystems being held at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute. The minister said that fisheries management should focus on environmental, economic and social factors with equal importance. “In addition to aiming at ending poverty, hunger and malnutrition, the sustainable development should ensure universal access to health care to all with major emphasis on gender issues. It should also ensure the elimination of all forms of inequality everywhere, she said. At the same time, it is the need of the hour to reduce the pressure on ocean resources, she added. Protection of key habitats and sustainable management of fisheries and aquaculture are vital to restore the productivity of the ocean. Marine resources have the potential to boost the economic growth of the world, but many anthropogenic activities in its environment have taken a heavy toll on ocean health. Restoring the productivity of the ocean would help to ensure future growth, food security and jobs for coastal communities, the Minister said. The state has started promoting the concept of co-management in fisheries by setting up management societies at harbours and at fishing villages. The government took series of measures to ensure sustainable development of the marine fisheries sector in consultation with the scientific community. The measures, including implementation of minimum legal size (MLS), regulation of engine power of fishing

crafts and regulation of size of fishing crafts have had positive impacts on resources, she said.

Kerala: Suchitwa Sagaram runs out of steam

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/suchitwa-sagaram-runs-out-of-steam/article30452603.ece

"Fishers say enthusiasm has fizzled out due to lack of funds, govt. apathy. Suchitwa Sagaram, Kerala's celebrated clean sea mission that garnered much global attention, has run out of steam due to the lack of funds. The fishers, who brought back truckloads of plastic waste from the sea after the project's ambitious take off in 2017, say their enthusiasm has fizzled out due to many factors, including government apathy. Moreover, the women employed at the collection point and the shredding unit complain of delayed wages, an issue they have been facing for sometime now. “It takes some effort to detangle the plastic waste from our nets, wash it and then collect it in the bags. Though the Minister promised an incentive based on the volume of waste we bring back, there has been no follow-up. We are getting very poor catch these days and we are not very keen on saving environment when our own survival is at stake, says Wilson, fishermen. Visible dip Peter Mathias, president, All Kerala Fishing Boat Operators Association, says there is a visible dip in the quantity of plastic each trawler brings back nowadays and it will be difficult to keep the project afloat without government intervention. “Only trawlers can efficiently sweep the sea floor and scoop up huge amounts of waste while fishing. But with the government introducing an exorbitant raise in the registration, deposit and annual licence fee in the mechanised sector, it has created a lot of resentment among the fishers. We were the ones who conceived the project, named it and volunteered to bring back the waste. In the initial days we used to bring double the quantity and I feel we can still make it a success with government support, he says. No collection points Another challenge faced by the authorities is the management of plastic accumulation at harbours that do not have Suchiwa Sagaram collection points. “Proper collection and transport, especially from harbours such as Azheekkal, is a major challenge and usually it's done only after repeated appeals, he adds. The project had made headlines again when it provided 500 kg plastic granules for the construction of Keralapuram-Kovilmukku road. But the employees attached to the project say they have been struggling due to the erratic pattern in the disbursal of wages. “The women employed at the Neendakara shredding unit received their wages for five months only a day before Christmas and their salary is still pending. Though we have employed women from fisher families for Suchitwa Sagaram, there is no specific fund allocated for the project, says an official from Harbour Engineering Department. No support Last year, a London-based NGO had visited Neendakara to study the project and extended their support for the initiative. “We were told that the people from the NGO had offered to take care of our salaries and we should wait for that. But there has been no change in our condition even after several months,

says an employee.

Kerala: Stop harassing coastal people: Sabha

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/stop-harassing-coastal-people-sabha/article30473394.ece

"'Officials of local bodies forcing people to give written declarations'. The Dheevara Sabha has urged the State government to stop harassing people living in coastal areas in the name of Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) violations. In a press statement issued here on Friday, Dheevara Sabha general secretary V. Dinakaran alleged that officials with local self government institutions had been visiting houses and forcing the people to give "written declarations. "The government should not consider fishermen families who have been living in coastal areas for so long and encroachers in the same way, Mr. Dinakaran, former MLA, said. CRZ violation He said that as per a list prepared, 50,000 houses along the coastline would have to be demolished in the State for violating Coastal Regulatory Zone norms. "The government should submit the list to the Supreme Court after omitting the houses of coastal people. It should not initiate steps that will lead to the eviction of people from coastal areas. If needed, the government should enact a law to protect the interest of fishermen and people living in coastal areas, he added. The Dheevara Sabha also warned of protests if the government continue to target the coastal people in the State. Unauthorised Last month, the Alappuzha Coastal District Committee (CDC) had identified as many as 4,536 unauthorised constructions in Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) area in the district. According to third interim report published on the website of Alappuzha district administration (http://alappuzha.nic.in), the highest number of 822 CRZ violations are in Punnapra South grama panchayat in Ambalappuzha taluk. It is followed by 429 unauthorised constructions in Punnapra North, 427 in Mararikulam South and 412 in Mararikulam North grama panchayats. Of the 36 local bodies including four municipalities and 32 grama panchayats to which CRZ rules are applicable, CRZ violations have been found in two municipalities and 26 grama panchayats. Officials said that unauthorised constructions in the zone included fishermen dwelling and other buildings. Violations Earlier, following the Supreme Court verdict in the Maradu illegal flat case, the State government proposed to look into all constructions along the coast for CRZ violations in the State. The CDC with district collector as chairman was constituted as per a Government order issued in October for carrying out the process. Other districts Besides Alappuzha, the CRZ violations in Kasaragod, Kannur, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Thrissur, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts will be listed under the initiative.

India: Kerala tops SDG index; Bihar at last rank

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala-himachal-pradesh-ap-lead-performers-

in-niti-aayogs-sdg-india-index-2019/article30432342.ece

"Kerala tops states in progress towards UN Sustainable Development Goals, while Bihar is at the bottom of Niti Aayog's SDG Index, released on Monday. Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim have joined all the southern states in the top tier of front runners who scored more than 65 points, out of a possible 100. Ending hunger and achieving gender equality are the areas where most states fall far short, with the all-India scores for these goals at 35 and 42 points respectively. On the other hand, Niti Aayog has given India an overall score of 60 points, driven mostly by progress in clean energy and sanitation (88); peace, justice and strong institutions (72); and affordable and clean energy (70). The SDGs are a set of 17 broad-based global goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, and intended to be achieved by 2030. With one-sixth of the world's population, India is key to the achievement of the goals. How do the States fare? The UN has developed 232 indicators to measure compliance on the part of member nations. Niti Aayog has adapted its monitoring approach to the Indian context, with a set of 100 indicators of its own for the purposes of this Index. Only 40% of these indicators were also used for last year's baseline index, meaning that the two are not directly comparable. However, it is still interesting to note thatKerala has retained its top spot from last year, while Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim have shown the most improvement. The second SDG – zero hunger – shows sharp divergence in the performance of states, with little middle ground. Kerala, Goa and parts of the north-east -- including Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim – have scored above 65, with Goa at 75 points. However, 22 of the states and union territories have scored below 50, with the central Indian states of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh scoring below 30, showing abysmal levels of hunger and malnutrition. The chosen indicators are related to child stunting, obesity and anaemia, as well as agricultural production and subsidised food distribution. On the fifth SDG – gender equality – almost all states fare poorly. Only Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala have managed to cross 50 points. The indicators considered include crimes against women, eradicating sex selection and discrimination against daughters, and access to reproductive health schemes, as well as indicators showing women's economic and political empowerment and leadership. A sex ratio of 896 females per 1000 males, a 17.5% female labour participation rate, and the fact that one in three women experience spousal violence all contribute to a low score countrywide. The Swachh Bharat Mission has contributed largely to the high scores on the sixth SDG – clean water and sanitation – although that was helped by the fact that four out of seven indicators dealt with toilets and sanitation, while only one indicator was related to safe and affordable drinking water. All states and union territories except for Delhi have scored above 65, with the national capital scoring poorly on the percentage of urban households with individual household toilets (less than one percent) and, oddly, providing no data on districts verified to be open defecation free. Delhi also has 81% of blocks with overexploited groundwater, vastly higher than any other state. Government

schemes to provide electricity and cooking gas connections to rural India contributed to progress in the seventh SDG – affordable and clean energy – although there were no indicators looking at other important areas such as renewable energy and energy efficiency. To a certain extent, the indicators chosen for the sixth and seventh SDGs seem to align closely with the aims of flagship Central schemes.

Kerala: Meet to discuss fisheries laws, climate change

https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/meet-to-discuss-fisheries-laws-climate-change/article30428331.ece

"Fisheries resource depletion, climate change, and new laws governing marine and inland fisheries will figure prominently in a two-day seminar being organised here at the end of January by the unions under the Kerala Fisheries Coordination Committee. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Fisheries Minister J. Mercykutty Amma will address the seminar, being organised with experts' and scientists' help at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute here. There has been serious depletion in both pelagic and demersal fish resources, a constant cause for worry among all group of fishermen, said Charles George of the Matsya Thozhilali Aikya Vedhi, which has taken the lead in organising the discussions. New regulations on inland fisheries will also be discussed in detail. The proceedings have been divided into six sessions, which will consider important issues facing the fisheries sector in the State.

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