

Kerala Safety at Sea News Articles

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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, has not 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: 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: 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: 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: 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.