

Headlines

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) - Page No.14 , GS 2

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**IF YOU RISK NOTHING,
YOU RISK EVERYTHING.**

GEENA DAVIS

Wellable

Heart Lamp glows, story collection wins the Booker Prize for Banu and Deepa

Page No. 1, GS 2

The Hindu Bureau

KOLKATA

Kannada writer, lawyer, and activist Banu Mushtaq, 77, began writing about her people, their joys, sorrows and anxieties, over five decades ago.

On Tuesday, *Heart Lamp*, a collection of 12 short stories selected from her work written between 1990 and 2023 and translated by Deepa Bhashti, won the International Booker Prize for 2025 from a shortlist featuring books in French, Italian, Danish, and Japanese.

It's a first win for Kannada, and the first time in the history of the prize that a collection of short stories has been honoured.

The award for an Indian writer comes three years after Geetanjali Shree won the prestigious literary prize for *Tomb of Sand*,



Tales of nuance: Banu Mushtaq, right, and Deepa Bhashti with the International Booker Prize, 2025 in London. GETTY IMAGES

translated from Hindi by Daisy Rockwell.

Ms. Mushtaq, who hails from Hassan in Karnataka, uses a language that “sings of resilience and nuance” to narrate the everyday lives of Muslim women, moved by their lived experiences of pain and suffering in a patriarchal society.

Equally compelling is Ms. Bhashti’s “radical trans-

lation”, which moved the Booker Jury Chair Max Porter to remark that it “ruffles language to create new textures in a plurality of Englishes”.

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Content.

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Fact

- **The Booker Prize was first awarded in 1969. The inaugural Booker Prize was awarded to P.H. Newby for his novel “Something to Answer For”.**
- **Founders: Tom Maschler and Graham C Greene.**
- **It is awarded for fiction written in English (not the translated one) and published in the UK and Ireland.**
- **Until 2014, only novels written by Commonwealth, Irish, and South African citizens were eligible to receive the prize. Later, it was expanded to all nationalities.**
- **Important winners: 1st Indian origin winner – VS Naipaul, 1st Indian citizen winner – Arundhati Roy.**

Year	Author	Work
1971	V.S. Naipaul	In a Free State
1981	Salman Rushdie	Midnight's Children
1997	Arundhati Roy	The God of Small Things
2006	Kiran Desai	The Inheritance of Loss
2008	Aravind Adiga	The White Tiger
2022	Geetanjali Shree	Tomb of Sand

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Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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China, Pakistan decide to include Afghanistan in CPEC

Press Trust of India

BEIJING/ISLAMABAD

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is set to be expanded to Afghanistan with the Foreign

Ministers of the three countries agreeing on it as part of broader efforts to boost “trilateral” cooperation.

The announcement on expansion of CPEC was

made following a meeting among Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, his Pakistani counterpart Ishaq Dar and Afghanistan's Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Beijing,

according to a Pakistani readout.

India has been severely critical of the CPEC as it passes through Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir. New Delhi is also opposed to

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The trilateral meeting took place days after the Taliban regime recently warmed up to India.

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Fact

- **China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is an infrastructure project initiated in 2015. It aims to enhance China's energy imports and trade while developing Pakistan's infrastructure.**
- **The CPEC includes modern transportation networks linking ports in Gwadar and Karachi with northern Pakistan and China's Xinjiang region.**
- **CPEC is a 3,000-km long route of infrastructure projects**
- **It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar Port, enabling China to access the Indian Ocean and in return China will support development projects in Pakistan to overcome the latter's energy crises and stabilising its faltering economy.**

Mains

- **Q1. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is viewed as a cardinal subset of China's larger 'One Belt One Road' initiative. Give a brief description of CPEC and enumerate the reasons why India has distanced itself from the same. (2018)**
- **Q2. China and Pakistan have entered into an agreement for the development of an economic corridor. What threat does this pose for India's security? Critically examine. (2014)**
- **Q3. "China is using its economic relations and positive trade surplus as tools to develop potential military power status in Asia". In the light of this statement, discuss its impact on India as her neighbour. (2017)**

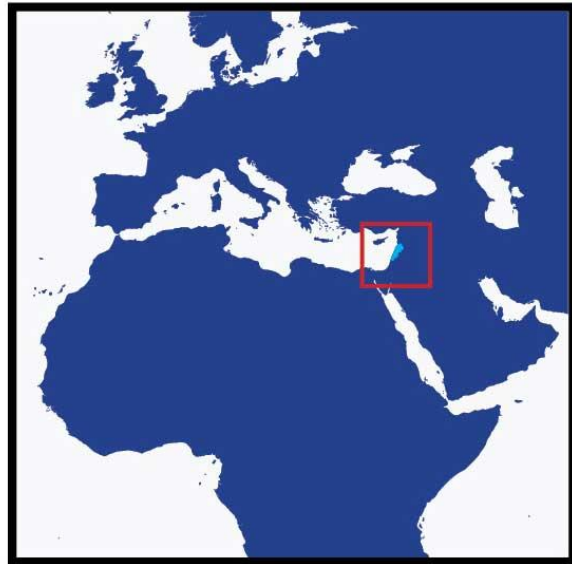
Israel's isolation

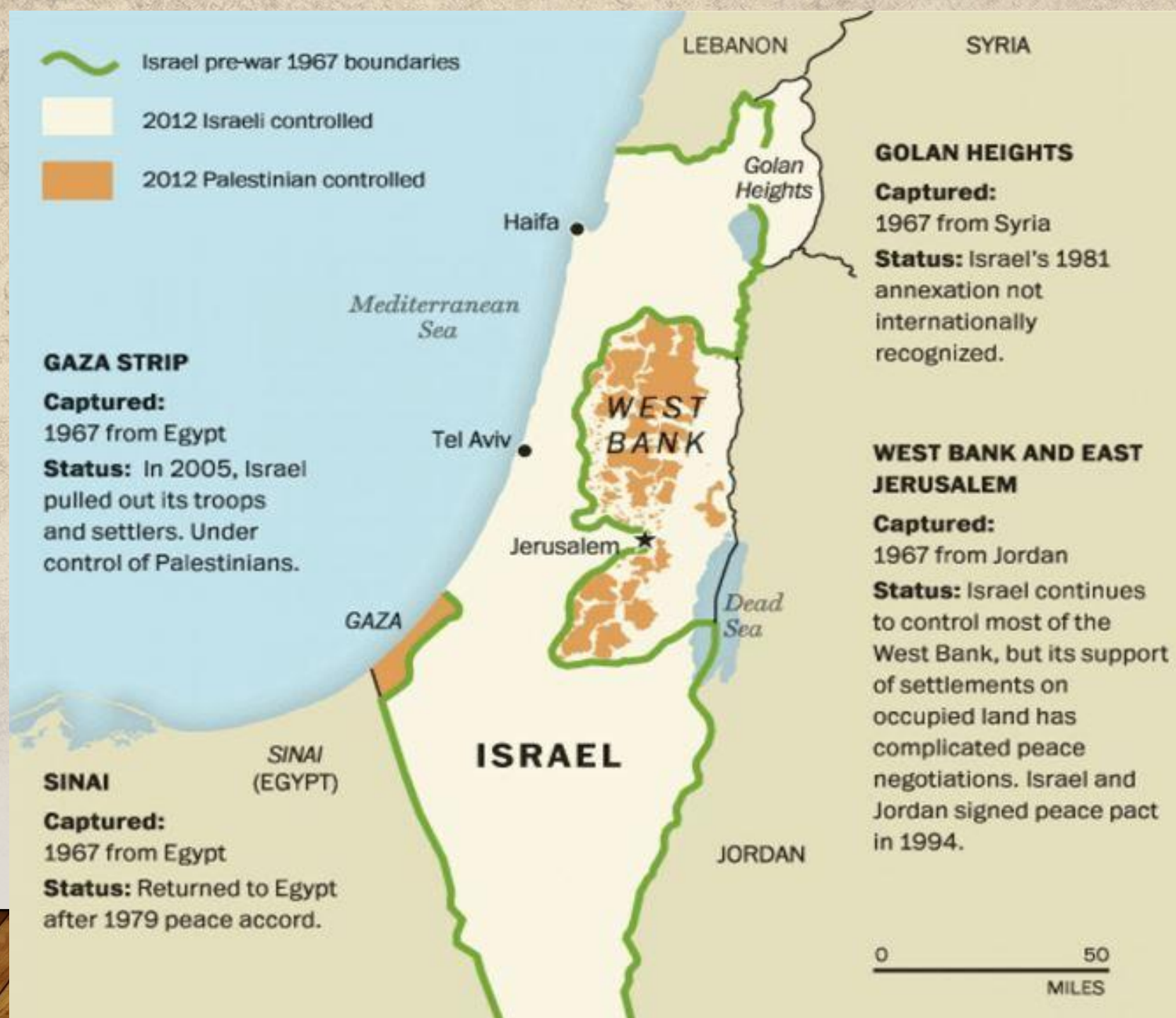
Netanyahu must not be allowed to get away with mass murder

The joint statement by the leaders of Canada, France and the United Kingdom, and announcements by the U.K. and the EU to pause trade talks with Israel are proof that the Netanyahu government is growing more isolated over its brutal campaign on Gaza. Since the ceasefire ended on March 18, over 3,000 residents have been killed in the enclave, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. Israel's chokehold on aid and humanitarian supplies has pushed thousands to the brink of starvation, a fact that even Donald Trump, President of Israel's all-time ally, the U.S., referred to during a trip to West Asia last week. Mr. Trump's decision to skip Israel was seen as a mark of his displeasure with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy on the issue. Despite the rebukes, Mr. Netanyahu has said Israeli Defence Forces needed to continue to target Hamas operatives in the area, and added that Israel would now re-take full "military control" of the Gaza strip, which the IDF had vacated in 2005. The comments provoked an angry response from the leaders of Canada (Mark Carney), France (Emmanuel Macron), and the U.K. (Keir Starmer), all of whom had pledged their support to Israeli actions in response to the October 7, 2023 terror attacks. They called the level of human suffering in Gaza "intolerable" and Israel's escalation of bombardment a "disproportionate" response, condemned the Israeli leadership for threatening to evict all Palestinians forcibly from the strip, and recommitted to a "two-state solution" for Israel and Palestine, to be discussed at a United Nations conference in June. Significantly, the three countries even threatened sanctions against Israel. Mr. Netanyahu's response, to accuse the three leaders of handing Hamas a "huge prize", and vowing not to stop "until total victory is achieved", indicates that he still believes that he can continue without being checked.

It is time for the international community to speak up so that Mr. Netanyahu does not think he can get away with what international agencies are calling genocide. New Delhi has notably thus far not issued any statement. This silence may be because of its own preoccupation with Pakistan and due to Israel's unequivocal support over Operation Sindoor. There is no link or equivalence between the two situations, however. Too many lives have been lost in the incessant bombardment by Israel of an area of two million people. Despite the depredations, Israel has not, with any clarity, met its objectives of bringing back the hostages or of wiping out Hamas's presence there yet. Mr. Netanyahu has tried to frame his government's actions as a "war of civilisation over barbarism", but it is he who must consider how much this direction-less war that appears to punish the weakest and most defenceless the most resembles the latter more than the former, as the numbers of supporters for this war diminish worldwide.

Page No. 6, GS 2







Source: UN Ocha, 2023, Israeli Defence Force

Content.

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Development without the savaging of urban biodiversity

Page No. 6, GS I,3

Biodiversity, which refers to the variety and the variability of living organisms on this earth – and fundamental to human well-being, a healthy planet, and economic prosperity for all – is under peril. About 25% of species are facing the threat of extinction.

The theme for International Day for Biological Diversity this year (observed annually on May 22) is “Harmony with nature and sustainable development”. The date ‘commemorates the adoption of the text of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on May 22, 1992’. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) was also developed by the CBD with four goals as well as 23 targets to conserve global biodiversity (conserve and manage 30% of terrestrial and marine biodiversity) by 2030. Target 12 of the GBF lays emphasis on enhancing green and blue spaces in cities and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity conservation. Goal 11 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal also states the importance of making cities and human settlements safe, resilient and sustainable. But, still, urban biodiversity is under great threat with unplanned development and human greed.

Green space in urban sprawls

Almost half the world’s population lives in urban areas, a percentage that is expected to rise to 70% by 2050. City spaces are of premium value and face competing demands. In such a situation, do we have space for greenery? The answer is yes if you consider the range of benefits urban biodiversity offers.

First, health benefits. Urban trees provide provisional services such as food, fibre and water, minimise the urban heat island effect (a much discussed topic) and help in flood control. They help in temperature control, pollution abatement, water conservation and carbon sequestration, and keeping carbon dust and suspended particulate matter in check. Tree lines of a 10 metre width can reduce noise pollution by 5 decibels. In Frankfurt, green belts were shown to reduce the temperature by 3.5° C and increase the relative humidity by 5% when compared to the city centre. Green spaces also provide much needed recreational and spiritual services in the form of parks in what would otherwise be concrete jungles.

Second, economic benefits. Theodore Endreny, Professor of Water Resources and Ecological Engineering, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry estimated the value of annual services provided by mega city trees to be around \$9,67,000 (₹8 crore) per square kilometre of tree cover. Therefore, protecting existing greenery, pursuing the development of parks and new urban green spaces, establishing tree avenues along the roads, and conserving natural rivers



S. Balaji, IFS

is presently
Co-Chairman, Access
and Benefit Sharing
Committee of the
National Biodiversity
Authority, Chennai,
and former Principal
Chief Conservator of
Forests, Government
of Tamil Nadu

City managers
must
mainstream
biodiversity
considerations
in decision
making, and
make
conservation
a mass
movement
in cities

and water bodies should be undertaken. The key element of developing green infrastructure is promoting community health and well-being.

In its latest report, the Forest Survey of India has estimated the average forest cover in leading urban cities to be only 10.26% of their geographical area (Mumbai 25.43%; New Delhi and Hyderabad 12.6%, Bengaluru, Chennai and Ahmedabad 6.85%, 4.66% and 3.27%, respectively). Chennai and Hyderabad have lost 2.6 and 1.6 square kilometres of forest cover between the 2021 and 2023 assessments.

The GBF gives a framework to urban planners for biodiversity conservation in cities by protecting blue and green spaces and developing new ones. It suggests enhancing native biodiversity, ecological connectivity and improving human health and well-being.

In this context, the UN Habitat’s 3-30-300 prescription is relevant. The principle is: Every home, workplace, or school should have a view of at least three established trees. Neighbourhoods should have a minimum of 30% tree canopy cover and a public green space of at least 0.5 to 1.0 hectares, should be accessible within a 300-metre walk or bike ride from every home.

City biodiversity index

A city biodiversity index is prepared based on the present status of the city in terms of three large parameters – the extent of native biodiversity in the city, ecosystem services provided by them and the level of governance of biodiversity. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiative (ICLEI) Asia has prepared a city biodiversity index using 23 indicators for cities such as Kochi, Gangtok and Nagpur. Once the current biodiversity status of the city is assessed through a survey, a local biodiversity strategy and action plan (LBSAP) is prepared to improve the status of the city in terms of biodiversity conservation and sustainable human welfare.

Urban areas have the resilience to support biodiversity if there is an enabling environment. Local biodiversity could be augmented while undertaking plantations in cities. In Chennai, the greening of the Chennai Koyambedu market in 2021 (undertaken by the Care Earth Trust with the financial support of Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority) helped in the natural regeneration of 141 species of higher plants belonging to 39 families and 106 genera within two years. The site also attracted 35 bird and 27 butterfly species that are considered bioindicators of biological diversity. The Koyambedu model mimics a three-storied natural forest which would be better than the Miyawaki model to enhance native biodiversity in small parcels of land available in cities.



The Care Earth Trust prepared a strategy and action plan in 2018 for the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) to plant one million native trees in Chennai city over five years. The sprawling Madras Race Club land at Guindy is being transformed into a lake for augmenting groundwater recharge. However, urban development and encroachment has swallowed up many waterbodies in and around Chennai and Bengaluru. The crucial Pallikarandai marsh in Chennai which was once considered a wasteland and garbage dump has been partly restored and declared as a reserved forest (Ramsar site). Most urban waterbodies are losing their ecological integrity due to garbage and sewage pollution. They must be ecologically restored after preventing garbage dumping and treating sewage through conventional treatment or nature-based solutions. Ensuring legal protection to the remaining lakes and waterbodies in urban areas is a necessity before they are lost.

Many independent houses in Chennai have now given way to multi-storeyed flats leading to the disappearance of home garden trees (coconut, mango, jackfruit). This could also be a reason for the reduction in the city’s green cover. As a condition to granting planning permission for new structures, the GCC should consider mandating the planting of at least five trees in a plot that measures over 2,400 square feet along the plot boundary. This will help greening the city in a decentralised manner. The horticulture department should also promote roof gardens and kitchen gardens for every household to cultivate greens and medicinal plants. This will not only help in augmenting city biodiversity but also help in improving the health and well-being of people.

Need for collective action

City managers need to take stringent action against those who destroy greenery and pollute waterbodies. It is heartening that the Supreme Court of India has been tough on the executive for the mass destruction of trees over acres in the Kancha Gachibowli area in Hyderabad, for the development of IT infrastructure. Development should not lead to the wanton destruction of biodiversity. City managers must mainstream biodiversity considerations in decision making, taking a long-term view to achieve sustainable development. The involvement of all stakeholders such as the resident welfare associations, non-governmental organisations and corporates in city greening and protecting waterbodies from pollution and encroachment is important to make biodiversity conservation a mass movement in cities.

The views expressed are personal

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Fact

- **Almost half the world's population lives in urban areas, a percentage that is expected to rise to 70% by 2050. City spaces are of premium value and face competing demands.**
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- Chennai and Hyderabad have lost 2.6 and 1.6 square kilometres of forest cover between the 2021 and 2023 assessments.
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Overfishing — the threat to ocean wealth, livelihoods

Page No. 6, GS 3

The Indian marine fisheries sector has stabilised at around three to four million tonnes of capture a year, indicating that India has reached its maximum potential yield.

Yet, despite this huge output, there is inequity. Small-scale fishers represent 90% of the fishing population but catch only about 10% of the volume; the remaining is by larger mechanised fishing operations. Further, three-quarters of India's marine fisher families live below the poverty line. Attempts to catch 'just one more kilo' with newer nets and bigger engines either yield no more fish or marginally increase volumes but with much higher debt, fuel and other costs for already hard-pressed communities.

On a recent fishing trip aboard a commercial shrimp trawler in the Arabian Sea, the full dynamic payout was evident. For every kilogram of shrimp retained on board, the nets disgorged over 10 kilograms of discarded bycatch. These were juvenile fish and non-target species which were tossed back (more dead than alive) into the waves.

India's multi-species, multi-gear fisheries make bycatch management especially intractable, with a single shrimp trawl impacting the populations of dozens of fish and invertebrate species. Such indiscriminate trawling damages marine biodiversity by degrading reef and oceanic communities, undermining food webs, and eroding the foundations of future catches.

The ecological consequences are stark. Juvenile fishing, facilitated by smaller mesh sizes (<25mm) that allow sub-legal fish to enter nets, depletes spawning stock biomass, driving long-term declines in commercially important species such as sardine and mackerel. These types of declines can take years or even decades to recover – or in worst case scenarios, are irreversible.

Such collapses abroad offer concerning precedents. Canada's Northern cod fishery crashed in 1992 under heavy harvest pressure, prompting a moratorium that still leaves stocks far below historical levels. Off California, the Pacific sardine fishery collapsed mid-century in the 1900s, forcing closures from 1967 to 1986 and again in recent decades as populations failed to



Vijai Dharmamony

is Senior Manager, Climate Resilient Fisheries, Environmental Defense India Foundation

Letting overexploitation continue will only deepen poverty, erode marine biodiversity and forfeit sustainable yields

rebound. India's regulatory framework is complicated, which only adds to this. All the coastal State/Union Territories have their own Marine Fisheries Regulation Act (MFRA), creating a patchwork of rules that unscrupulous fishermen can (and do) circumvent simply by landing their catch across a State border. A species protected as juveniles in one State may be legal in a neighbouring State, enabling the seamless laundering of undersized fish and undermining conservation efforts.

India should look into harmonising these disparities into a national standard by integrating scientifically established catch limits, have uniform minimum legal size (MLS), fishing gear restrictions, and closed seasons. Without these, India will continue to face MFRA enforcement issues, and consequent depletion of marine biodiversity.

Solutions to pursue

There are lessons from other countries. New Zealand's (fish) quota management system (QMS) has shown excellent results by aligning science and policy. Since its introduction in 1986, total allowable catches are calibrated against robust stock assessments – which have stabilised and, in some cases, rebuilt key fisheries, while providing clear, tradable quotas (individual transferable quotas) to commercial, recreational, and customary fishers alike.

Adapting the QMS for India's large mechanised trawl fleet, at least on a pilot basis, could curb the depletion of marine biodiversity by tying fishing allowances to actual stock health, rather than vessel size or fuel use. Targeted size limits and minimum legal-size regulations already pay dividends.

There are success stories from India. After Kerala enforced a minimum legal size for threadfin bream, catches rose by 41% within a single season – allowing fish to mature produces greater yields over time and better income for the fishers.

Reining in the fish-meal and fish-oil (FMFO) industry is another urgent priority. The bycatch

feeding this industry creates perverse incentives, as more discard means more feed profits. In some States' trawl fisheries, over half the haul weight is low-value bycatch, much of which is juvenile fish. This bycatch is ground into meal and a lot of it is exported, while Indian fish consumers and the Indian aquaculture industry lose out on critical nutrition sources. Capping FMFO quotas, mandating on-board release of juveniles, or redirecting bycatch toward local aquaculture brood stock would align industry incentives with biodiversity conservation.

However, achieving these reforms demands action at multiple levels. At the national level, the central government needs to optimise vessel licences, infrastructure grants and fisheries subsidies, towards an ecosystem-based regulatory approach. States will need to bolster enforcement with well-equipped patrols and real-time reporting tools. Fisher cooperatives and village councils should be empowered as co-managers of local marine protected areas and breeding sanctuaries. Urban and rural consumers must wield their buying power, choosing only legally sized, sustainably sourced seafood, and refusing offerings that undermine marine biodiversity.



We stand at the crossroads

Climate-driven storms, coastal erosion, and market volatility already threaten India's nearly 8,000 km (recalculated to 11,098 km recently) coastline and its 3,000 plus fishing villages. Letting overexploitation continue will deepen poverty, erode marine biodiversity, and forfeit sustainable yields that could feed millions. But the solutions lie within reach: science-based quotas, harmonised regulations, community-led stewardship, and a policy shift that focuses on long-term sustainability.

On this International Day for Biological Diversity, let us pledge to protect India's vibrant marine life. We must do this not just for our food and livelihoods today but also for the ecological resilience and equitable prosperity of generations to come.

Content.

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Educator at StudyIQ IAS

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