

## **Problem of Ghost Gear - Fishing**

### **What is the issue?**

\n\n

\n

- The problem of ghost gear in Indian oceans is getting to be a serious concern.

\n

- India should emulate innovative solutions from across the world to tackle this.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the recent happenings?**

\n\n

\n

- Ghost gear is any fishing equipment that has been lost, discarded or abandoned in water bodies.

\n

- The problem of ghost gear has grown from a fishing outcome that people had not heard of to one that is now difficult to ignore.

\n

- In March 2018, fishermen hauled 400 kg of fishing nets out of the sea in a few locations off Kerala's south coast.

\n

- Reportedly, many divers regularly make underwater trips just to extract nets that have sunk to the ocean floor.

\n

- It covers the regions off India's coasts, ranging from Tamil Nadu to Maharashtra.

\n

\n\n

### **What is the impact?**

\n\n

\n

- Ghost nets are often 'ghost fishers' as ocean currents carry them for thousands of km across the ocean floor.  
\n
- E.g. discarded Indian and Thai fishing nets have been fished out of Maldivian coasts  
\n
- They entangle, injure and drown marine life and damage live corals along the way.  
\n
- The Olive Ridley Project is a U.K. registered charity that removes ghost nets and protects sea turtles.  
\n
- The project, between 2011 and 2018 alone, recorded around 600 sea turtles being entangled in ghost gear near the Maldives.  
\n
- Of this, 528 were Olive Ridelys, the same species that come in thousands to Odisha's coasts to nest.  
\n
- Other casualties worldwide include whales, dolphins, sharks and even pelagic birds.  
\n
- In 2016, another study found over 5,400 marine animals belonging to 40 different species entangled in ghost gear, or associated with it.  
\n

\n\n

## **What are the concerns?**

\n\n

- The analysis showed a huge gap in data from the Indian, Southern and Arctic Oceans, and thus prompted on future studies to focus on these areas.  
\n
- But even after two years, there are still no data pertaining to the extent of prevalence of ghost gear off India's coast.  
\n
- Data is crucial because the detrimental effects of these nets also spillover into other countries and oceans.  
\n
- The government is currently preparing a national ghost net management policy.  
\n
- But besides ghost nets, the larger concern is the bigger violations wherein large vessels do fishing where they are not supposed to.

\n

- Unless this is checked, implementing a policy on the management of ghost nets is hard.

\n

- The consequences of overfishing, using nets of the smallest mesh size, and illegal fishing are far less visible, but are more worrying.

\n

- Entire fishing communities are affected by these actions.

\n

- Especially in developing countries like India where the demand for fish keeps rising, the impact is serious.

\n

\n\n

### **What should be done?**

\n\n

\n

- There are numerous innovative solutions to tackle the problem of ghost nets, which India should consider.

\n

- E.g. in countries like Canada and Thailand, fishermen retain their used nets.

\n

- These are recycled into yarn to craft socks and even carpet tiles.

\n

- For the first time in a developing country, a gear-marking programme is being tested in Indonesia.

\n

- By this, the trajectory of fishing gear, if it drifts away, can be studied better.

\n

- Outreach and education among fishing communities would also be crucial along with policy-level changes.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: The Hindu**

\n