

When the wealth creators are invisibilised

**A response to the Budget 2020 with respect to
fisheries**

National Fishworkers Forum

**Delhi Solidarity Group, The Research Collective and Public Finance Public
Accountability Collective**

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Introduction

At the first anniversary of the formation of the Department of Fisheries there is little to celebrate in the Budget 2020 from the point of view of traditional and small-scale fishworkers who are engaged in capture and extensive culture fisheries in both inland and marine sectors. An independent Department of Fisheries has been created in 2019 **to provide sustained and focused attention towards the development of fisheries sector**. According to the Economic Survey of India “USA and South East Asia are the major export markets for Indian seafood with a share of 34.81 percent and 22.67 per cent respectively. India has rich and diverse fisheries resources. **The marine fisheries resources are spread along the country’s vast coastline and 2.02 million square km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and 0.53 million sq.km continental shelf area. The inland resources are in the form of rivers and canals (1.95 lakh km), floodplain lakes(8.12 lakh hectares), ponds and tanks (24.1lakh hectares), reservoirs (31.5 lakh hectares), brackish water (12.4 lakh hectares), saline/alkaline affected areas (12 lakh hectares) etc.”**

It is important to note that even within this budget, the livelihoods of those engaged in fisheries have been subsumed into other sectors; these are agriculture, infrastructure and the over-arching Blue Economy model of development.

In the budget speech Ms Nirmala Sitaraman mentioned three important points specifically with respect to the fisheries sector.

- **Prosperity to farmers can be ensured by making farming competitive. For this, farm markets need to be liberalised. Distortions in farm and livestock markets need to be removed. Purchase of farm produce, logistics and agri-services need copious investments. Substantial support and hand-holding of farm-based activities such as livestock, apiary, and fisheries need to be provided for. Farmers desire integrated solutions covering storage, financing, processing and marketing.**
- **Blue Economy: Our government proposes to put in place a framework for development, management and conservation of marine fishery resources.**
- **Youth in coastal areas benefit through fish processing and marketing. By 2022-23, I propose raising fish production to 200 lakh tonnes. Growing of algae, sea-weed and cage Culture will also be promoted.**
- **Our government will involve youth in fishery extension through 3477 Sagar Mitras and 500 Fish Farmer Producer Organisations. We hope to raise fishery exports to `1 lakh crore by 2024-25.” – Excerpts from the Budget Speech**

While looking at this budget speech, the focus is more towards the development of intensive culture fisheries rather than the capture fisheries, which also means that the emphasis will be more towards building additional income for the farmers who engage in fishing rather than creating opportunities for the traditional and small scale fishworkers. This silent move to shift the traditional occupation from the fishworkers towards ‘liberalising’ farm markets is definitely not in the interest of the fishworking communities [both inland and marine]. Rather than strengthening the Fishers Producer Organizations or Fishers Cooperatives by building its capacities and addressing the gaps the new Producer Organisations is definitely ambiguous.

The ambition of raising the fish production to 200 lakh tonnes (20 million tons) in 2022-23 when the total fish production in the country is at 13.42 million metric tonnes (provisional) during 2018-19, can only be possible through heavily promoting intensive culture fisheries in the inland sector with the private players entering into the fray. Of this, the marine fisheries contributed 3.71 million metric tonnes and the inland fisheries contributed 9.71 million metric tonnes. During 2018-19, 71 per cent of marine fisheries potential and 58 per cent of the inland fisheries potential have been harnessed.

Industrialisation and Corporatisation of the Indian waterbodies looks like one of the main mottos of this government. The budget allocations and the policy directions in this regard definitely is looking at shifting the occupational patterns of the small scale and traditional fishworkers in the marine sector and will be seeing new entrants in the highly intensive aquaculture production which definitely will have an impact on the land use pattern, and the environment. In this regard the budget is definitely a disappointment to small scale and traditional fishworkers at large.

What does this budget mean for the fishworkers

1. Department of Fisheries

The total budget allocation for the department has been increased to a total of INR 825 crore from 700 crore as per the Revised Budget of 2019-20; of this the capital outlay, which would give an indication of the long-term asset building in the sector by the state is at a meagre INR 19.16 crore. In line with the Draft National Fisheries Development Board [NFDB] Act which envisages the trimming of the NFDB, there is a budget cut introduced in the allocation here. The Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries scheme sees an increase of about INR 75 crore, and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund sees the corpus sum increase from INR 1 crore to INR 10 crore. The other sums allocated to the running of the department and the various fisheries institutes remain about the same. The sum allocated to the department is split as follows:

Heads	Actuals 2018-19 (INR Crore)	Allocated 2020-21 (INR Crore)
Secretariat	0	21.8
Fisheries Institute	89	149
Coastal Aquaculture Authority	4	4.5
National Fisheries Development Board	101.62	77.5
Integrated Development and Management of Fisheries	484.16	560
Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund	1	10

The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) has no mention in this year’s budget in spite of being allocated approx. INR 3700 crore last year.

2. Department of Agricultural Research and Education & Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare

The fund allocation needed to undertake the Research and Development [R&D] has been intended to scale-up intensive aquaculture has been provided through the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer’s Welfare via the following:

- **Fisheries Science:** The provision is to implement research and academic programmes in fisheries and aquaculture. It also provides technical, training, analytical, advisory support and consultancy services in the field of resources assessment and management, standardization of aquaculture hatchery and grow-out culture technologies, responsible fishing system and species diversification and utilization of inland saline soils for aquaculture, fish health monitoring, etc. **Allocation: INR 156 crore.**
- **National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE):** The Institute facilitates the acquisition of managerial and technical skills by Extension Officers, Managers, Scientists and Administrators in all sectors of agricultural economy to enable them to provide most effective support and services to Farmers and Fishermen for practicing Sustainable Agriculture and fishing practices. **Allocation: INR 8.34 Crore.**

In addition, the budget aims to alleviate the agrarian distress through the incorporation of farmers into the intensive culture fisheries model. This is reflected in the intention of the framework for development, management and conservation of marine fishery resources and promotion of algae, sea weed and cage culture that will assist in raising fish production to 200 lakh tonnes by 2022-23. Government aims to involve youth in fishery extension through 3477 ‘sagar mitras’ and 500 fish farmer producer organizations and hope to raise fishery export to rupees 1 lakh crore by 2024-25. The details of these programmes will need to be monitored in order to ascertain who they are primarily intended for. However, for the small-scale and traditional fishworkers, who are primarily devoid of secure revenue and tenure rights over the land and sea respectively, intensive culture fisheries provide no opportunities.

3. Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change

In order to undertake intensive culture fisheries across the inland, brackish and marine waters, a significant amount of environmental regulation would be needed to be put in place. Instead, alongside the draft National Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy [NIFAP] and the draft Mariculture bills due to be passed this year, the MoEFCC budget sees significant cuts in sectors pertinent of fishworkers.

Heads	Actuals 2018-19 (INR Crore)	Allocated 2020-21 (INR Crore)
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National Coastal Mission (NCM)	129.55	103
Climate Change Action Plan	33.17	40
Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)	114.42	100
Conservation of Corals and Mangroves	-	0
Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems	63.6	68.4
National River Conservation Programme	150.33	0

One cut is to the National Coastal Mission [NCM] which oversees the implementation of the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notification. While the implementation of this notification is years behind schedule, the budget allocation has been cut with a note that the project is being completed with the World Bank funded Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project. It is important to recall that the shift from 'regulation' to 'management' is something that fishworkers have historically been opposed to. In a roundabout manner, the ICZM project aims to 'manage' the coastline among competing actors, as opposed to regulating those actions which have a detrimental impact on the coastal socio-ecology. The second is to the Conservation of Corals and Mangroves program which has been entirely scrapped, and the third is the shift of the National River Conservation Programme from the MoEFCC to the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. Alongside the cuts to an already under-funded CPCB, these cuts will worsen the state's regulatory capacities along and in the water-bodies where intensive culture fisheries are to be introduced. These cuts similarly weaken the capacity of small-scale fishworkers to resist the land acquisition, construction and pollution impacts that are envisaged as part of the Blue Economy.

4. Blue Economy, as a combination of funds allocated under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Ministry of Shipping and Ministry of Home Affairs

The policies with regards to fisheries in India have been transforming along two lines. One is the enhancing of production through intensive culture fisheries as discussed in points 1-3. The other has been through the adoption of the Blue Economy model of development which has multiple components. These components assume significance when read together with Chapter 5 of the Economic Survey of India 2020 which introduces the idea of 'Assemble in India for the World'. With the aim to compete with China in the global labour market, this component which is predicted to form a quarter of the INR 5 trillion dollar Indian economy by 2025 will need a significant amount of infrastructure that includes Economic Zones, the dilution of labour laws and ease in obtaining environmental clearances. The budget allocation to the infrastructure sector and the passing of a 103 lakh crore National Logistics Policy in order to build a seamless national cold supply chain for perishables are indications of the

thrust in this direction. It is to be noted that this government till date has not spelt out what are the components of Blue Economy but the schemes prepared for the coasts and the budget allocations are largely on the lines of industrialising the coast.

Some of the Blue Economy Components which will affect the fishworkers adversely are:

- A. **Sagarmala:** This programme involves the streamlining of cargo movements across multiple modes which are river, road, rail and sea. This involves the setting up of cargo moving infrastructure-ports, jetties, cargo facilities etc, in addition to a standardisation of logistics in order to save on per kilometre cargo moving costs. This is complemented by the setting up of industrial clusters and economic zones along these multi-modal transport routes to further enhance the time and cost saving. And finally, the fourth component is the incorporation of communities, displaced as a result of the infrastructure built, into the economic opportunities, both direct and indirect, created as a result of this programme. The allotment for Sagarmala is a testimony to that.
- B. **Deep sea fisheries:** Indian fisheries in the near-coastal and continent shelf are completely exploited, with concerns of heavy over-exploitation as well. In order to resolve this, there is a push to move fishing effort away from these waters. In addition to intensive culture fisheries and Sagarmala industrial employment, there is a push to move fishing effort to deeper waters. The funding for the physical infrastructure is under the Department of Fisheries, but the related capacities such as weather monitoring, resource mapping and fishery resource assessments are under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- C. **Non-living Ocean Resources:** With the limitation in the value of living resources contributing to the nation's economy, there is a thrust to increase the exploitation of non-living resources from the oceans. This requires conducting surveys for harnessing the marine non-living resources in a sustainable way, available in EEZ and deep sea region of the Indian Ocean. These include gas hydrates, poly-metallic nodules, hydrothermal sulfide minerals, cobalt crusts which contain valuable noble metals available along the mid oceanic regions of the Indian Ocean; Acquisition and operation and maintenance of Research Vessels for undertaking all activities; development of Ocean technology for Ocean Energy, Desalination, Deep Sea Mining, Coastal Environmental Engineering and Marine Instrumentation, sea front facility, development of underwater vehicles, ocean acoustics, electronics and marine sensors.
- D. **Tourism:** Over the last few years, globally there has been a thrust to increase the share of tourism in the national GDP. This is mainly driven by its allegedly benign design that allows for greater returns to investment, as well as being lean on infrastructure and the environment and thus the ability to deliver social gains. In line with this, the 'conservation fix' of the Blue Economy, brings together conservation and tourism as

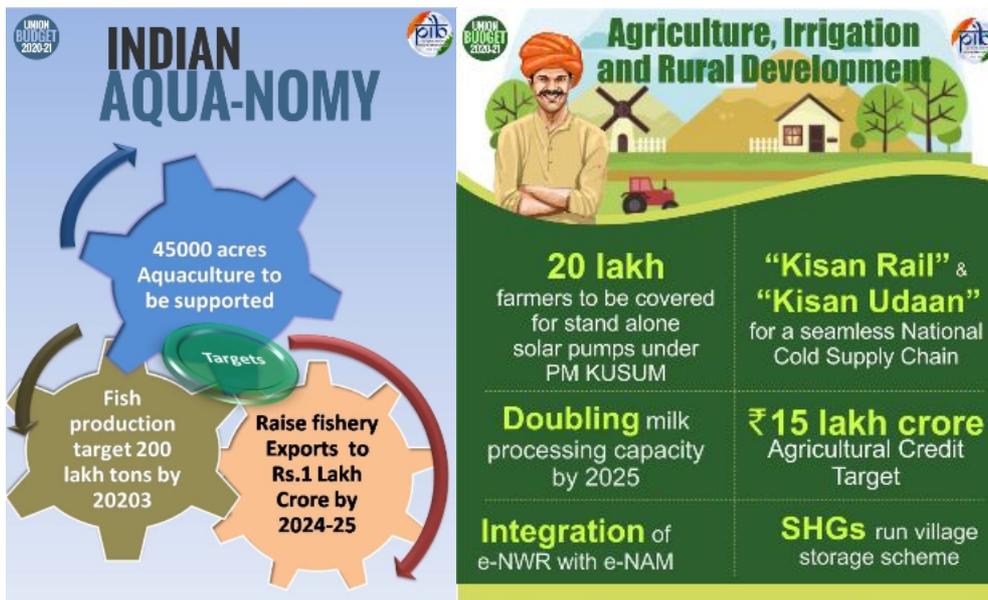
complementary sectors to derive greater value than capture fisheries in the inland, coastal and marine spaces.

- E. **Security:** Finally, given the rise in the value of assets to be places along India’s water bodies, especially its coastline, there is a push to increase maritime security and there is a thrust to include coastal stretches under the Border Infrastructure and Management.

Given these points, it is important to read the budget allocations under the following sectors as directly affection fishworkers:

Heads	Actuals 2018-19 (INR Crore)	Allocated 2020-21 (INR Crore)
Oceanographic Survey (ORV and FORV) and Marine Living Resources (MLR)	27.86	35
Ocean services, Modelling, Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART)	434.49	567
Oceanographic Research	690.39	812.8
Development of Minor Ports	111.06	142.5
Sagarmala Schemes and Projects	235.09	297
Ministry of Tourism	2090.62	2499.83
Border Infrastructure and Management	1806.35	1788.37
Coast Guard Organisation	4711.63	5032.76

Infographics: Indian Budget at a glance



UNION BUDGET 2020-21

CULTURE AND TOURISM



NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS



Indian Institute of Heritage and Conservation



Five Archaeological Sites as Iconic Sites



Museum on Numismatics and Trade



Tribal Museum in Ranchi



Maritime Museum in Lothal

UNION BUDGET 2020-21

Redefining Railways Five Major Measures



Setting up a **large solar power capacity** alongside rail tracks

150 passenger trains to be run through PPP mode along with station re-development

More Tejas type trains to **connect iconic tourist destinations**

High speed train between **Mumbai to Ahmedabad** to be actively pursued

148 km long Bengaluru suburban transport project at a cost of **₹18600 crore**



#JanJanKaBudget

UNION BUDGET 2020-21

Highway Revolution



Accelerated development of highways

Development of **2500 Km** access control highways, **9000 Km** of economic corridors, **2000 Km** of coastal and land port roads and **2000 Km** of strategic highways

Delhi-Mumbai Expressway and other packages to be completed by 2023

Chennai-Bengaluru Expressway to be started

Monetization of 12 lots of highway bundles of over **6000 Km** before 2024