Island fisheries at the centre of India's Blue Economy push

Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands to anchor growth in tuna, seaweed and ornamental fisheries

Posted On: 10 NOV 2026 10:06AM by PIB Delhi

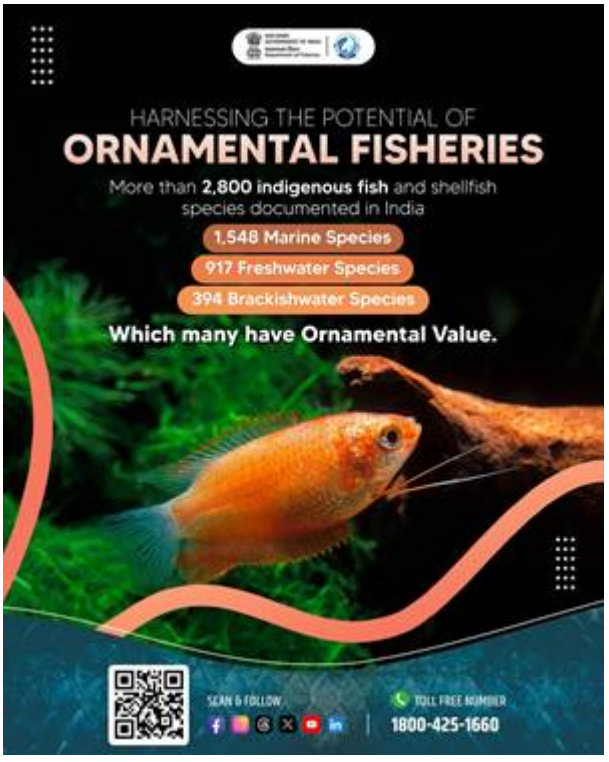
India is endowed with a vast and diverse marine resource base, supported by a coastline of approximately 11,099 km and an Exclusive Economic Zone of nearly 24 lakh sq. km. With an estimated marine fisheries potential of 58.6 lakh MT within its EEZ, the sector plays a vital role in sustaining the livelihoods of nearly 50 lakh fishers, while contributing significantly to food security, nutrition, employment, income generation and export earnings. India today ranks among the leading fisheries and aquaculture producing nations globally, with seafood exports valued at around ₹73,890 crore during FY 2025-26, underscoring the sector's growing importance in the national economy and global seafood trade. India's fisheries sector is evolving from a production-focused activity into a dynamic, technology-driven and value-oriented pillar of the national economy. Since 2015, the Government of India has significantly stepped-up public investment in the fisheries sector, committing Rs. 39,272 crore through key schemes and programmes.



Under PMMSY, substantial investments have been envisaged for the island territories to strengthen fisheries development. Andaman & Nicobar Islands have been allocated an investment of **₹218 crore**, while **Lakshadweep** has been earmarked **₹175 crore**, reflecting the Government's commitment to unlocking the fisheries potential of these strategically important maritime regions.

This focus on island-led fisheries development was also reflected in the Union Budget 2025-26, which outlined an enabling framework for the sustainable harnessing of fisheries resources from the Exclusive Economic Zone and the High Seas, with special emphasis on Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The emphasis marks a clear recognition of the strategic importance of these island territories in accessing underutilised marine fish resources within the Indian EEZ and adjacent High Seas, while placing sustainability and scientific management at the centre of future expansion.

Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands occupy a distinctive position in India's marine geography. Together accounting for nearly 40% of the country's Exclusive Economic Zone, the two island groups extend India's presence across the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, with access to rich oceanic fishing grounds and major tuna migration routes. Lakshadweep's lagoon systems, coral reefs and surrounding deep-sea waters offer favourable conditions for tuna fisheries, seaweed cultivation and reef-based livelihoods. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands, with their extensive coastline, diverse marine habitats and proximity to Southeast Asian maritime routes, provide similar opportunities for expanding sustainable fisheries, mariculture and value-added seafood production. Their ecological richness and strategic location make these islands central to India's efforts to build a more diversified and ocean-based fisheries economy.



Tuna the development has emerged as the centrepiece of the Government's strategic roadmap for high-value marine fisheries. The waters surrounding Lakshadweep and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands harbour substantial underutilised stocks of Yellowfin, Skipjack and Bigeye tuna, offering strong potential for sustainable, export-oriented fisheries. The Government is advancing a science-based and value-chain driven approach that integrates modern deep-sea vessels, selective fishing methods such as hook and line and pole and

line, improved onboard handling, cold-chain expansion, processing and canning facilities, and efficient export linkages. In Lakshadweep, a five-year plan seeks to double tuna production to 50,000 tonnes, supported by the induction of deep-sea vessels, mother vessels and the islands' traditional, ecologically sound pole and line fishery. In the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, a dedicated Tuna Cluster under PMMSY is accelerating fleet modernisation and infrastructure development, including new vessels, upgraded fishing fleets and expanded cold storage capacity, while MPEDA's strengthened presence is expected to improve market access and facilitate direct exports from the islands.

Beyond Tuna value chain development, the Government is also advancing seaweed and ornamental fisheries as complementary pillars of the island economy, broadening the fisheries growth model beyond capture fisheries alone. Lakshadweep's clean lagoon systems and the coral-rich ecosystems of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands offer favourable conditions for sustainable seaweed cultivation, with potential applications across food, nutraceuticals, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and bio-industrial products. With Lakshadweep notified as a dedicated Seaweed Cluster, the roadmap envisages large-scale cultivation, seed banks, hatcheries and capacity building to develop a reliable seaweed value chain. Ornamental fisheries add another high-value opportunity, particularly in Lakshadweep, which hosts over 300 reef-associated ornamental species. The strategic plan focuses on establishing medium-scale rearing units, promoting conservation-based and regulated collection practices, and improving market access for sustainably sourced aquarium species, thereby creating diversified livelihood opportunities for island communities while safeguarding fragile marine ecosystems.

To enable these emerging areas of growth, modernising fisheries infrastructure has become a key element of the Government's approach in the island territories. Investments are being channelled into facilities across the value chain, including fish landing centres, ice plants, cold-chain networks, onboard preservation systems, fish aggregating devices, boat-building yards, value-addition units and systems to support export facilitation. These measures are intended to build local capacity, reduce post-harvest losses and improve the readiness of island-based fisheries to access domestic and export markets.

Taken together, these interventions indicate a long-term effort to place India's island territories at the centre of a more diversified and sustainable marine economy. By linking tuna fisheries, seaweed cultivation, ornamental fisheries, infrastructure development, research support and market access, the strategy seeks to move beyond resource extraction towards value creation within the islands. Its success will depend on balancing production growth with ecological safeguards, while ensuring that fishers, local enterprises and island communities are able to participate meaningfully in emerging domestic and export value chains.

***

JP

(Release ID: 2334511) Visitor Counter : 905
Read this release in: Urdu , हिन्दी , Marathi , Bengali , Assamese , Gujarati , Tamil , Kannada , Malayalam

Share

885 words | 4 min read