



Sea Cucumber

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Why in News

Recently, the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** has seized two tonnes of sea cucumber, a banned marine species, in the **Gulf of Mannar** and Palk Bay areas in Tamil Nadu.



Key Points

- **About:**

- Sea cucumbers are marine **invertebrates that live on the seafloor** found generally in **tropical regions**. They're named for their unusual oblong shape that

resembles a fat cucumber.



- There are about 1,250 species of sea cucumber, all of which belong to the **taxonomic class Holothuroidea**.

This class falls under the **Echinodermata phylum**, which also includes many other well-known marine invertebrates, such as sea stars, sea urchins and sand dollars.

- They are **crucial to maintain the balance of ocean habitats**.

- **Significance:**

- They are an integral part of the **coral ecosystem** as **one of the main by-products** of the sea cucumbers digestion of sand is calcium carbonate and this is essential for the survival of the coral reefs.
- They **act like garbage collectors of the ocean world**, and they recycle nutrients, thus playing an important role in keeping coral reefs in good condition.

- **Threats:**

Illegal Trading and smuggling since the species is high in demand across south-east Asia, mainly China, for food and traditional medicine.

- **Protection:**

- **IUCN Red List:** Brown Sea Cucumber (Endangered), Blackspotted Sea Cucumber (Least Concern), Blue Sea Cucumber (Data Deficient), etc.
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule I.

- **Conservation Efforts:**

In 2020, the **Lakshadweep Islands administration** created the world's first conservation area - 239 sq. km - for sea cucumbers.

Source: PIB