

Coral Rehab programme

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Why in news?

The Gulf of Mannar (GoM) Marine National Park has proposed to cover one sq. km of area in Kariyachalli and Vaan islands in Thoothukudi group in Gulf of Mannar for rehabilitation of coral reefs.

▪ The programme:

- A coral rehabilitation technique comprises *selection of site, identification of suitable native species, precision in fragmentation, choosing fragment size, fixing positions, and effective monitoring protocols*, resulted in good coral growth and its survival.
- Vaan is **one of the 21 islands in the Gulf of Mannar**, which was declared a marine biodiversity park in 1986.
- The GoM Marine National Park had been **implementing the coral rehabilitation programme since 2002** and had so far covered eight sq. km areas in GoM region, where coral reefs suffered bleaching and degradation.
- The **National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR)** has **proposed dropping 'melted plastic rocks or slabs' on the seabed** for growing coral reefs and address the problem of disposal of plastic waste.
- The rehabilitation programme, employing 'concrete frame slabs' method, would be launched after getting government approval.
- Corals would start growing in 60 days using the concrete frames as sub-state.
- The Acropora coral species would grow by 10 to 12 cm per year.

▪ Criticisms:

- NCCR's idea **would turn the reefs into graveyards** as corals in the GoM are already stressed and bleached under climate change
- Cases like worn-out tyres were tried as artificial reefs in Florida and Costa Rica, but they turned out to be catastrophic.
- The structures might look useful initially but would destroy corals lately.