

Cooperative-Led Blue Economy gains Momentum; Union Fisheries Secretary reviews Raigad Cluster in Maharashtra

Raigad Fisheries Cluster emerging as Model for Integrated Value-Chain Development; Focus on Scaling Infrastructure and Market Linkages

Posted On: 28 OCT 2025 4:29PM by PIB Mumbai

Mumbai, 28 October 2025

Union Secretary, Department of Fisheries (DoF) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, visited the Fisheries Cooperative Cluster in Raigad district today to review its progress and engage directly with cooperative stakeholders. The cluster is being developed as a model for integrated fisheries value-chain development. The visit aimed to assess ground-level challenges and identify opportunities for strengthening fisheries-based livelihoods through a cooperative-led approach. During the interaction, Dr. Likhi met 251 members representing 156 Primary Fisheries Cooperative Societies and 9 Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs) from Raigad, Maharashtra.



Underscoring the Government's commitment to cooperative-led development, Secretary, Department of Fisheries (DoF), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, emphasized the need to align fisheries cluster activities with flagship national initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the

Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF). He noted that a Joint Task Force between the Department of Fisheries and the Ministry of Cooperation is actively working to strengthen fisheries cooperatives across the country. Echoing the spirit of the deep-sea fishing vessel inauguration held a day earlier by Union Minister of Home Affairs and Cooperation, Shri Amit Shah, Dr. Likhi highlighted fisheries cooperatives as a cornerstone of the Government's vision for the progress and prosperity of India's fishing community.

During his visit to the Fisheries Cooperative Cluster in Raigad, Dr. Likhi directed the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) to conduct awareness, training, and grievance redressal camps across all taluks of the district to ensure wider scheme outreach and effective implementation. He underscored the importance of the cluster-based approach in achieving integrated development across the fisheries value chain and encouraged stakeholders to adopt innovative strategies for boosting exports, enhancing infrastructure, improving financial access, and strengthening market linkages. Dr. Likhi noted that the interaction marked the beginning of a consultative planning process involving multiple rounds of dialogue with cooperative representatives to identify gaps and design holistic, need-based interventions. He assured that infrastructure development needs raised by the stakeholders would be prioritized.

Joining the event virtually, Shri Sagar Mehra, Joint Secretary (Inland Fisheries), Department of Fisheries, emphasized the need for convergence across ministries and schemes to ensure holistic and sustainable fisheries development. He called for a technology-driven, convergence-based project approach for long-term viability.

Ms. Neetu Kumari, Joint Secretary (Marine Fisheries), highlighted the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for harbour management, focusing on empowering fisheries cooperatives to efficiently manage harbours and landing centres. She noted that these initiatives are being implemented in close coordination with the Ministry of Cooperation, NCDC, and other partner institutions, reflecting a whole-of-government approach.

Dr. B.K. Behera, Chief Executive, National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), presented an overview of Raigad's fisheries landscape and outlined key interventions planned over the next five years. These include projects under PMMSY for infrastructure strengthening, cold chain and processing development, market linkages, and welfare initiatives aligned with Maharashtra's fisheries growth targets.

The interaction with fisheries cooperative societies saw active participation from stakeholders representing marine, freshwater, and brackish water segments, who shared success stories and highlighted key challenges, including the need for fishing jetties, ice plants, cold storage, and dredging facilities in Raigad. Participants emphasized the importance of women-centric interventions such as health camps and sanitation facilities, and suggested exposure visits to states like Andhra Pradesh to learn from best practices and improve credit linkages for fishers. Financial institutions assured continued support to strengthen cooperative efforts. The discussions focused on reinforcing cooperative structures and integrating local insights into PMMSY Phase 2 to build a resilient, inclusive, and self-reliant fisheries sector in line with the vision of *Sahkar se Samridhi* and *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.

The meeting was attended by District Collector Raigad, Shri Kishan Rao Jawale, and Commissioner of Fisheries, Maharashtra, Shri Kishore Tawade, along with representatives from Fisheries Cooperative Societies of Macchimar Sahakari Sansthas in Raigad, Murud, Karanja, Uran, Shrivardhan, Roha, Pen, and other regions. Senior officials from the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, Department of Fisheries, Government of

Maharashtra, Ministry of Cooperation, NCDC, NFDB, and representatives from MPEDA, NABARD, ICAR institutions, subordinate offices, and stakeholders from across States/UTs also participated.



Rationale For Developing Fisheries Clusters

The Fisheries Cooperative Cluster in Raigad, like other 34 Clusters is notified under PMMSY, was designed to strengthen collective fisheries-based enterprises by integrating aquaculture, mariculture, and deep-sea fishing activities. The overarching aim of these 34 clusters is to promote a more competitive, organized, and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture sector by fostering integrated development across the entire value chain. These clusters are envisioned as engines of growth that will enable economies of scale, improve financial viability, and strengthen backward and forward linkages from production and harvesting to processing, marketing, and export. By bringing together fishers, fish farmers, cooperatives, FFPOs, SHGs, enterprises, and start-ups, the clusters aim to generate employment, enhance incomes, and create sustainable livelihood opportunities. They are also designed to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship, and the adoption of modern technologies, thereby accelerating the transformation of India's fisheries sector into a vibrant and resilient pillar of the Blue Economy.

To strengthen the identified fisheries clusters, the Department of Fisheries is working closely with the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, NABARD, and the Ministry of MSME. This collaboration aims to enhance infrastructure, expand financial access, promote value addition, and build a skilled workforce, thereby boosting entrepreneurship, attracting investments, and fostering a robust start-up ecosystem for sustainable growth in the fisheries sector.

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