



Union Minister, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD), Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh launches Access Pass for Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) Fishing

Completely online and free of cost Access Pass for enhanced access, traceability and higher incomes

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Hon'ble Union Minister, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAHD) & Panchayati Raj Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh launched the **Access Pass** for Fishing in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) today on **20th February 2026** at KCC Ground, **Veraval, Gujarat**, in the presence of Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Panchayati Raj; Shri George Kurian, Minister of State, MoFAH&D and Ministry of Minority Affairs; Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Union Secretary, Department of Fisheries, GoI; and Shri Arunkumar Solanki, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Gujarat (Agriculture, Farmers' Welfare & Cooperation Department).

The event was attended by Representatives of 24 Fisheries Cooperatives from all Coastal States/UTs, along with physical participation of more than 2,000 participants and all States/UTs, Fisheries Cooperatives, and FFPOs also joined online from over 500 locations.

During the launch, Hon'ble Union Minister FAHD Shri Singh **handed over the Access Pass for Fishing in EEZ to 37 Fishermen representing 24 Fisheries cooperative societies** from all Coastal States/UTs of India. Hon'ble Union Minister FAHD Shri Singh also distributed **Safety Kits to the Fishermen**, which included Life Jackets, High-Beam Torches, and GPS devices empowering them to safely navigate offshore fisheries activities, **followed by distribution of Rs. 2 Lakh grant to the newly formed Fisheries Cooperative Societies** in Gujarat.



The launch of the Access Pass is a significant milestone towards operationalising a modern, sustainable and fisher-centric governance framework for India's EEZ, aimed at expanding offshore fishing, increasing fisher incomes, promoting responsible utilisation of marine resources, and advancing the national vision of a resilient and inclusive Blue Economy.



Hon'ble Union Minister, FAHD & Panchayati Raj, **Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh**, in his address highlighted that the EEZ framework was drafted after extensive consultations with fishermen associations, cooperatives, States/UTs and scientific institutions, ensuring a transparent, inclusive and future-ready system. The Minister shared that over applications have already been received on the RealCraft portal, and Access Passes will be issued as per guidelines over the coming month.

Hon'ble Union Minister, Shri Singh urged fishermen to organise themselves into cooperatives for growth, apply for the Access Pass, and benefit from the EEZ rules, as the fish catch by any Indian vessel in the EEZ/high seas is duty-free as per Budget announcement 2026. He highlighted the Government's investments in various welfare schemes, safety systems such as Transponders for real-time tracking, and PFZ advisories that save lives and improve productivity. He also emphasized on the Joint Working Group with the Ministry of Cooperation to strengthen fisheries cooperatives and expand opportunities in deep-sea fisheries.

Prof. S. P. Singh Baghel, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, & Panchayati Raj, GoI in his address highlighted the Access Pass has been designed as a simple, transparent, and fully digital system that provides authorised Indian fishing vessels with clarity and confidence to operate in offshore waters. Hon'ble MoS, FAHD Prof. Baghel highlighted that the Rules

strictly prohibit the entry of foreign fishing vessels into the Indian EEZ, safeguarding the nation's marine wealth, and added that this step will empower Indian fishermen and expand opportunities in deep-sea fisheries.

Mr. George Kurian, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying and Minority Affairs, Government of India, in his address highlighted that today's event symbolised India's resolve to advance into the next phase of marine fisheries development, an important step towards achieving PM Modi's vision of *Viksit Bharat 2047*. He noted that Veraval has been designated as a 'Fishing Harbour Cluster' under PMMSY, which will boost efficiency and enable economies of scale for the sector.

Dr. Abhilaksh Likhi, Union Secretary, Department of Fisheries, Government of India highlighted that the Access Passes will be issued through a transparent and seamless portal. He mentioned that EEZ remains significantly under-utilised, despite scientific assessments indicating substantial potential, particularly for high-value oceanic resources such as tuna and tuna-like species which command premium prices in international markets. Dr. Likhi, Union Secretary added the Department's focus is on sustainable growth of fisheries resources, and strengthening Fisheries cooperatives and FFPOs. He also underscored the emphasis on training and capacity-building across coastal states, along with infrastructure development such as the smart and integrated harbour at Jakhau under PMMSY.

Dr. B.K. Behera, Chief Executive, NFDB, set the context, thanked Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, for his leadership and guidance, and highlighted the various interventions in the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector in Gujarat via the various schemes led by the Department of Fisheries.

The program also witnessed participation of Ms. Sneha Bhapkar, In-charge Collector, Gir Somnath; Mr. Jaydip Singh Jadeja, SP, Gir Somnath; Mr. Rajesh Aal, RAC, Gir Somnath; Mr. Vijaykumar Kharadi, Commissioner of Fisheries; Mrs. Pallaviben Jani, President, Veraval-Patan Joint Municipality, Veraval; Mrs. Manjulaben Muchhar, President, District Panchayat, Gir Somnath, along with Senior officials of Department of fisheries, State fisheries department, National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), Export Inspection Council (EIC), Fisheries Cooperatives, Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs), and Local Fishers.

Background –

India with an EEZ spanning nearly 24 lakh square kilometres, possesses enormous potential for marine fisheries development, livelihood generation, and export expansion. The bulk of fishing activity by Indian vessels continues to remain confined to waters within 40-50 nautical miles from the coast. The vast EEZ beyond this range remains significantly under-utilised, despite scientific assessments indicating substantial potential, particularly for high-value oceanic resources such as tuna and tuna-like species. To unlock this potential, the Government of India had earlier notified the “Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), 2025” Rules on 4 November 2025, in line with the Union Budget 2025–26 announcement.

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