

Illegal Intrusion by Fishermen

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The Coastal State Governments and Union Territory (UT) Administrations are responsible for regulating fishing activities within Territorial Waters extending up to 12 nautical miles, as this subject falls under Entry 21 of the State List. The Union Government regulates fishing in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) beyond 12 nautical miles under Entry 57 of the Union List. Accordingly, the coastal States/UTs enforce their respective Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRAs) to govern fishing within territorial waters. Several States/UTs have also designated exclusive zones for traditional fishers operating non-motorized and motorized craft, where mechanized vessels are prohibited.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh has reported occasional incidents of illegal fishing by mechanized vessels from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry within its territorial waters, including in traditional fishing zones and the Pulicat Lake area. To address such, inter-state fishing issues, and in line with the advice of the Inter-State Council, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India vide Order dated 29 March 2023 had constituted three Regional Fisheries Management Councils (RFMCs) viz. Western, Eastern, and Southern RFMCs. These RFMCs serve as platforms for States/UTs to collaboratively resolve inter-state fishing disputes and ensure equitable access to marine resources. The Indian Coast Guard is represented in all three RFMCs. Issues raised by States/UTs are placed on the agenda of the relevant RFMC for deliberation.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has indicated that the coordinated action is undertaken with neighbouring coastal States/UTs through existing institutional mechanisms to prevent recurrence of such incidents and to ensure peaceful, uninterrupted fishing operations. Tamil Nadu has also highlighted proactive measures to strengthen institutional arrangements for safeguarding fishermen's safety and livelihoods.

Following concerns raised by Andhra Pradesh in the Southern RFMC meeting held on 19 August 2023, the Government of Tamil Nadu has issued an Order dated 31 January 2024 constituting a District-Level Committee comprising District Collectors and officials from Thiruvallur, Chennai, and Chengalpattu (Tamil Nadu) and SPSR Nellore, Prakasam, and Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh). The Committee is mandated to sensitise fishermen and address fishing-related disputes between the two States. Tamil Nadu has further informed that action is taken against offending fishing vessels under the Tamil Nadu Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1983, based on evidence, including photographs and videographs, provided by the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Similarly, the Government of Andhra Pradesh refers incidents of illegal fishing by vessels from Puducherry to the UT Administration for appropriate action. Andhra Pradesh is also pursuing amendments to the Andhra Pradesh Marine Fishing Regulation Act, 1994, to introduce more stringent provisions for effectively addressing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing within its territorial waters.

This information was given by Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh in the Lok Sabha in response to a question asked.

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