

PROTECTION OF TRADITIONAL FISHING RIGHTS AND LIVELIHOODS

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The fisheries up to 12 nautical miles from baseline is governed by the coastal States in accordance with their Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRAs). Under the respective MFRAs, many coastal States/UTs have reserved fishing zones for different categories of fishing vessels. Near-shore coastal waters, generally up to 5 to 10 kilometers from the shore, are exclusively reserved for artisanal and non-mechanized traditional fishing vessels, which protects traditional livelihoods, minimizes gear conflicts, and prevents resource overexploitation. Joint patrolling is conducted by State Fisheries Departments along with enforcement agencies, including the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), to prevent incursion of mechanised fishing vessels into such reserved zones. Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), satellite-based transponders are installed on mechanized and motorized fishing vessels, enabling real-time vessel tracking with geofencing and automated alerts to authorities in cases of incursion into areas reserved for traditional fishers.

The concept of Blue Economy encompasses many sub-sectors, including fisheries. Ministry of Earth Sciences, Govt of India, is steering the draft National Policy for India's Blue Economy. Sagarmala is a central sector scheme of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways with the target to promote port-led development in the country. As part of the project development, the respective project proponents are required to prepare the Social and Environmental Impact Assessment Report to assess the potential impacts of the proposed projects on the community and the environment. Simultaneously, project proponents need to prepare and implement a Social and Environmental Management Plan to mitigate any negative impacts that emerge during the studies of baseline conditions, impact assessment, and evaluation for the project. Further, improvement in the livelihood of communities in coastal areas is also undertaken through implementation of projects identified under the coastal community development pillar of the Sagarmala Scheme.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) being the nodal Ministry, reviews the issues relating to Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notifications issued from time to time. MoEF&CC, based on suggestions and proposals received from various stakeholders of coastal States/UTs, reviews the CRZ Notification for development of infrastructure along the coast, including concerns of the fishermen community.

The Department of Fisheries, Government of India (DoF, GoI), has undertaken comprehensive measures towards sustainable harnessing of marine fisheries resources and the welfare of small-scale and traditional fishers. The Government has notified the Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Rules, 2025 that mandates key conservation measures, including ecosystem approach to fisheries management, implementation of the uniform ban on fishing during fish breeding seasons; minimum legal size for fish capture and adoption of bycatch reduction measures, prohibition of destructive and juvenile fishing practices, and promotion of best practices to minimize post-harvest losses.

To ensure sustainable fishing, enhance fish stocks, and safety of fishermen at sea, a uniform 61-day annual fishing ban is implemented in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of India during the peak fish breeding season. Coastal States/UTs also enforce a corresponding ban within their territorial waters, aligning their schedules with the uniform ban notified by the DoF, GoI. Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), livelihood and nutritional support is provided to socio-economically backward active traditional fishers' families during the fishing ban/lean period. PMMSY also extends coverage through a Group Accidental Insurance Scheme for active fishers, ensuring social security and risk protection during fishing operations.

Under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the Government of India has, for the first time, extended dedicated support for sea ranching and installation of Artificial Reefs along the country's coastline. These interventions help prevent habitat degradation, enhance fish stocks, and strengthen the livelihoods of coastal fishers. PMMSY also promotes mariculture activities, including seaweed cultivation and open-sea cage culture, to reduce fishing pressure in nearshore waters and sustainably augment marine fisheries production. PMMSY further includes the component "Development of 100 Coastal Fishermen Villages as Climate Resilient Coastal Fishermen Villages (CRCFV)", aimed at transforming 100 villages selected jointly with the coastal States/UTs into economically vibrant and climate-resilient villages through need-based interventions including infrastructure and livelihood-enhancing activities.

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

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