

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the [Day] June, 2025

G.S.R. No. (E).—In exercise of the powers conferred by section 15 of the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976 (80 of 1976), the Central Government hereby makes the following Rules for the exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of fisheries resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India, namely:

Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India Rules, 2025

1. Short Title, Application, and Commencement

(1) These Rules may be called the **Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India Rules, 2025**.

(2) These Rules shall apply to all fishing and fishing-related activities conducted by Indian fishing vessels in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India.

(3) They shall come into force on the date of their publication in the Official Gazette.

2. Definitions

(1) In these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (a) **“Access Pass”** means a pass issued by the Issuing Authority under these rules to an Indian fishing vessel for fishing and fishing-related activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India.
- (b) **“Act”** means the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976 (80 of 1976).
- (c) **“Adjudicating Officer”** means an officer of the State Fisheries Department, not below the rank of Assistant Director of Fisheries, notified by the concerned State under its Marine Fishing Regulation Act.
- (d) **“Authorized Officer”** means an officer of the Indian Coast Guard, Indian Navy, Indian Customs, State Fisheries Department, or any other officer notified by the Central Government for boarding and inspection of fishing vessels in the Exclusive Economic Zone for the purposes of these rules.
- (e) **“Appellate Authority”** means a designated officer, not below the rank of Joint Secretary in the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Government of India, for the purposes of these rules.

- (f) **“Base Port”** means the port of operation of the fishing vessel indicated in the Access Pass
- (g) **“Catch Certificate”** means an official document, validated by the competent authority notified by the Central Government, accompanying a consignment of fish or fishery products to provide accurate and verifiable information about fish in the supply chain.
- (h) **“Destructive Fishing Practices”** means fishing practices that cause damage to habitats or the sustainability of fisheries, as notified by the Central Government.
- (i) **“Export Inspection Council (EIC)”** means the export certification body established under section 3 of the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963 (22 of 1963).
- (j) **“Fish”** means finfish, molluscs, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animals and plants, excluding marine mammals, reptiles, and seabirds.
- (k) **“Fishers”** means fishermen and fisherwomen engaged in fishing and fishing-related activities for livelihood or profit, including fish workers.
- (l) **“Fisheries”** means fishing and fishing-related activities, including the utilization, conservation, and management of marine fishery resources.
- (m) **“Fishing”** means searching for, trailing, pursuing, attracting, catching, taking, or harvesting fish by any method.
- (n) **“Fishing-related Activities”** means landing, packaging, marketing, processing, preserving, storing, live transportation of fish, transshipping, or transporting fish not previously landed at a port, or any other related operations.
- (o) **“Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUU Fishing)”** means activities identified as illegal, unreported, or unregulated fishing in the National Plan of Action notified by the Central Government under rule 13.
- (p) **“Indian Fishing Vessel”** means an Indian fishing boat as defined and registered under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (44 of 1958), or any other law for the time being in force in India.
- (q) **“Issuing Authority”** means an officer in the Department of Fisheries in the Central Government, designated for issuing Access Passes to Indian fishing vessels for fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India.
- (r) **“Mariculture”** means the culture of marine aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, crustaceans, and aquatic plants.
- (s) **“Mechanized Fishing Vessel”** means a fishing vessel with an engine fitted to the hull, using machine power for propulsion and fishing operations such as casting and pulling nets or operating lines.
- (t) **“Mother Vessel”** means a vessel, also termed as a carrier vessel, receiver vessel, or factory vessel, that supports fishing vessels at sea by receiving, storing,

processing, and preserving catch, and transporting it to port, and may provide fuel, food, water, medical needs of crew, or other assistance.

- (u) **“Motorized Fishing Vessel”** means a fishing vessel with an engine, fitted inside or outside, used solely for propulsion and not for fishing operations.
- (v) **“Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)”** means the authority established under the Marine Products Export Development Authority Act, 1972 (13 of 1972).
- (w) **“Notification”** means a notification published in the Official Gazette, and the term “notify” shall be construed accordingly.
- (x) **“Oceanic Fisheries Resources”** means living marine resources in the open ocean, beyond the continental shelf.
- (y) **“Operator”** means an individual or enterprise, or Fish Farmer Producer Organisations or Fisheries Cooperatives (including multi-state cooperatives), controlling or managing a fishing vessel or assuming responsibility for its operation.
- (z) **“Owner”** means a person, including an individual, partnership, Fish Farmer Producer Organisations, Fisheries Cooperatives (including multi-state cooperatives), or public or private body, whether incorporated or not, to whom a fishing vessel or a share in it belongs.
- (aa) **“Port”** means a port, fishing harbour, or fish landing centre designated by the Central or State Government by notification in the Official Gazette for the purposes of these rules.
- (ab) **“Prescribed”** means prescribed by rules notified under the Act.
- (ac) **“Registration and Licensing of Fishing Craft (ReALCRaft)”** means the web-enabled online application portal established by the Central Government for registering fishing vessels and issuing fishing licences, Access Passes, and LOA under relevant laws or rules or guidelines.
- (ad) **“Regional Fisheries Management Organization (RFMO)”** means an intergovernmental fisheries organization or agreement to which India is a party, with competence to establish conservation and management measures.
- (ae) **“Specified Area”** means an area specified for fishing or fishing-related activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India as specified by the Issuing Authority in the Access Pass.
- (af) **“Skipper,”** also termed as master, means a person having command or charge of a fishing vessel or responsibility for its operation.
- (ag) **“State”** means a State Government or Union Territory administration with a coastal location.

- (ah) “**Transponder**” means an electronic device fitted on an Indian fishing vessel that utilizes a satellite communication system to receive and transmit vessel-related data, including location and operational status.
- (ai) “**Verifying Officer**” means an officer of a State Government, notified by the Central Government in consultation with the State, responsible for verifying documents and physically inspecting fishing vessels for the grant of an Access Pass.
- (2) Words and expressions used but not defined in these rules, and defined in the Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976 (80 of 1976), and the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (44 of 1958), shall have the meanings assigned to them in those Acts.

3. Regulation of Fishing and Fishing-related Activities

(1) Access Pass Requirement

- (a) All mechanized fishing vessels and those motorised fishing vessels exclusively engaged in fishing for tuna and tuna-like species or motorised fishing vessels of 24 meters overall length and above shall obtain an Access Pass for fishing and fishing-related activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India beyond territorial waters.
- (b) No Access Pass shall be required for motorised fishing vessels of less than 24 metres overall length, except those engaged in tuna and tuna-like species;
- Provided that such vessels shall comply with the sea safety requirements, monitoring, control, and surveillance, and conservation and management measures, while operating in the Exclusive Economic Zone.
- (c) The application for an Access Pass shall be submitted online in the format specified in **Schedule I**, accompanied by the prescribed documents and processing fee.

(2) Process for Issuing Access Pass

- (a) The owner or operator of an Indian fishing vessel shall apply for an Access Pass online through the ReALCRaft portal.
- (b) The grant of an Access Pass shall be subject to the fitness and seaworthiness of the fishing vessel as per the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, and submission of prescribed documents and the processing fee.
- (c) The Verifying Officer of the concerned Port of Registry shall verify the application, including the validity and authenticity of documents, within two weeks and forward it to the Issuing Authority.

- (d) The Issuing Authority shall issue the Access Pass within five to ten working days, subject to satisfactory verification, in the form specified in **Schedule II**, which shall be downloadable by the applicant.
- (e) The Access Pass shall specify the applicable terms and conditions to be complied with by the fishing vessel, operator, or owner.
- (f) The operator shall ensure that the original Access Pass, in physical or digital form, is prominently displayed on board the fishing vessel and produced upon demand by any Authorised Officer.

(3) Validity and Renewal of Access Pass

- (a) An Access Pass shall remain valid for a period of three years from the date of issuance.
- (b) The owner or operator may apply for renewal at least 30 days prior to the expiry of the existing Access Pass, for a further period of three years.
- (c) The reasons for refusal of issuance or renewal of an Access Pass shall be recorded in writing by the Issuing Authority or Verifying Officer and communicated to the Applicant.
- (d) An Access Pass shall be non-transferable, non-assignable, and shall be vessel-specific, issued only for a fishing vessel registered on the ReALCRaft portal. The Access Pass shall not be sold, leased, or otherwise conveyed for any other purpose.

4. Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (MCS)

- (a) The fishing vessels with an Access Pass shall operate from and return to their Base Port for fish landing.
- (b) In the event of a fishing vessel intending to enter any port other than that referred to in para 4 (a), it shall intimate to the Registrar of the fishing vessels, the Issuing Authority, and the Authorized Officers.
- (c) In case an Indian fishing vessel is confiscated by the authorities of any other country, and the issuing authority is intimated to this effect, the Issuing Authority shall deactivate the transponder fitted on such Indian fishing vessel.
- (e) Fishing vessels, operators, and owners shall comply with the minimum provisions of sea safety, manning, and MCS provisions prescribed under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, that may *inter alia* include but not be limited to the following:
 - (i) Fishing vessels must carry light and sound signals in accordance with Rule 26 of the COLREGS.

(ii) The operator is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of both the fishing vessel and its crew by providing approved communication and safety equipment, as required by applicable national and international regulations or conventions. Specifically, the operator must ensure that the following minimum provisions are available on the vessel:

- a. Automatic Identification System (AIS)
- b. Satellite-based Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)/Vessel Communication and Support System (VCSS)
- c. Distress Alert Transmitter (DAT) or
- d. Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB)
- e. Life Buoys
- f. Life Jackets - 150% of the authorized crew capacity
- g. 25-watt VHF Radio/Satellite voice communication
- h. Radar Reflectors

(iii) The VMS and AIS units must be continuously operational whenever the vessel is at sea, and they shall not be tampered with. The vessel must transmit its details (including vessel identification, current geographic position, and date and time) via VMS to the designated national Fisheries Monitoring Center (FMC) at least every 4 hours.

5. Inspection and Enforcement

- (a) The Authorised Officer shall be responsible for monitoring, control, and surveillance of fishing vessels out at sea and by using the digital tools, including AIS/VMS/VCSS etc., to oversee and enforce the compliance of the provisions of these rules, the terms and conditions of the Access Pass and other such related matters.
- (b) The Authorized Officer shall report any violations in writing to the Issuing Authority, the Adjudicating Officer and the Registrar of the fishing vessels concerned, in such manner as notified by the Central Government.

6. Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs)

- (a) The Central Government, in consultation with scientific institutions, Coastal States, and fishers and their associations, shall notify Fisheries Management Plans (FMPs) for sustainable fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone, which shall be based on the best available scientific information, including fishing mortality or stock biomass levels consistent with management objectives such as Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). Mariculture including seaweed cultivation in the EEZ shall also be promoted as an additional measure to reduce fishing pressure, creation of additional livelihood and enhancing production from the sea.

- (b) All Fishing Vessels engaged in fishing and fishing-related activities in the EEZ shall comply with the notified FMPs. The notified FMP may include, but not be limited to, the following management actions:
- (i) Spatial and temporal fishing closures;
 - (ii) Fishing gear restrictions;
 - (iii) Minimum legal size of fish for capture;
 - (iv) Limits on the number of fishing vessels or participants in a fishery;
 - (v) Bycatch reduction measures;
 - (vi) Optimum utilization of conventional and non-conventional oceanic fisheries resources such as Oceanic squids, Myctophids, etc.
 - (vii) Measures to address marine pollution, abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) or ghost gear;
 - (viii) Skilling and capacity building for sustainable fishing for deep-sea and oceanic resources, and onboard fish handling.
 - (ix) Best practices for reducing post-harvest losses on board the fishing vessels;
 - (x) Identification and protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), including spawning, breeding, and feeding grounds.

7. Origin of Catch

- a) Fish harvested by Indian fishing vessels operating in the EEZ of India shall be treated to be of “Indian Origin” and shall not be subject to any import duty, cess, or levy when landed at a port located within the territory of India.
- b) Fish caught in the EEZ of India by Indian fishing vessels and landed at foreign ports shall be classified as exports and shall be governed by applicable Indian export laws and regulations.
- c) The Registrar of the fishing vessels concerned and any such other authority as notified by the Central Government shall be responsible for the verification of the catch-related data, duly authenticated by the Skipper of the vessel and recorded in the manner as prescribed under rule 10.

8. Catch and Health Certificates

- (a) For the Indian fishing vessels having Access Pass issued under these rules, the Catch Certificates shall be issued by the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), and the Health Certificates shall be issued by the Export Inspection Council (EIC), for the purposes of traceability, compliance with sanitary standards, and eco-labelling, in accordance with applicable national and international regulations.

- (b) Applications for Catch and Health Certificates shall be submitted through designated online portals of the respective agencies, which shall be duly integrated with the ReALCRaft portal for verification and processing of vessel and catch-related information.

9. Mid-Sea Transshipment

- (a) The operators or owners of fishing vessels with an Access Pass may undertake mid-sea transshipment to a mother vessel in accordance with the applicable measures of the RFMO concerned and the relevant guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India as promulgated from time to time.
- (b) The operators or owners shall intimate the Issuing Authority, the Registrar of the fishing vessels, and the Indian Coast Guard at least 48 hours in advance, providing details of the mother vessel, quantity of catch, species, and transshipment date, time, and coordinates, in the form specified in **Schedule III**.

10. Catch Reporting

The Central Government may, by notification, require the Indian fishing vessels to furnish such fishery data to the Registrar of the fishing vessels, Authorised Officer, Issuing Authority, or other authorities in digital form and at such periodical intervals as may be specified in that notification. The notification shall also specify the formats for voyage reports for different types of fishing vessels, which may *inter alia* include the details of fish catch, fish species, numbers, weight, fishing areas, and trip duration.

11. Fishers and Crew Identity

Every fisher and crew member on board a fishing vessel in the Exclusive Economic Zone shall carry a QR-coded Aadhaar card or a Marine Fishers Digital Identity Card, as notified by the Central Government.

12. Prohibition of Destructive Fishing, Juvenile Fishing, and No-Fishing Zones

The Central Government, in consultation with the States and scientific institutions, shall, by notification, regulate, restrict, and prohibit, including the following:

- (i) use of dynamite, explosives, poisons, noxious chemicals, or other destructive materials or methods;
- (ii) use of artificial lights for certain fishing methods, to catch or destroy fish;
- (iii) capture of juvenile fish or related activities’;
- (iv) Fishing in No Fishing Zones as notified from time to time.

13. Prohibition of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing

The Central Government shall notify a National Plan of Action to prevent, deter, and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, which the vessels operating in the EEZ shall comply with.

14. Compliance with RFMO and International Instruments

The Fishing and fishing-related activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone shall be carried out in compliance with the conservation and management measures (CMMs) adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) to which India is a party, including the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Such applicable measures shall be appended to the Access Pass and updated periodically.

15 Adjudication Process

On the receipt of a report from the Authorised Officer regarding contraventions of the provisions of these rules, notifications, or Access Pass conditions, the Adjudicating Officer shall conduct an inquiry, giving all the concerned parties a reasonable opportunity to be heard.

16. Violations and Penalties

- (a) The Adjudicating Officer, after inquiry under rule 15, may impose penalties for contraventions of the rules 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, or the notifications issued under these rules, or Access Pass conditions, as follows:

Category of Fishing Vessel	First Offence	Second Offence	Third and Subsequent Offences
(i) Motorised vessels, and (ii) Mechanised fishing vessels of less than 15 m overall length	Fine up to ₹5,000	Fine up to ₹10,000	Fine up to ₹20,000
Mechanised fishing vessels of 15 m to less than 24 m overall length	Fine up to ₹10,000	Fine up to ₹20,000	Fine up to ₹50,000
Mechanised fishing vessels of 24 m and above overall length	Fine up to ₹30,000	Fine up to ₹50,000	Fine up to ₹1,50,000

- (b) In addition to penalties under sub-rule (a), the Adjudicating Officer, based on the reasons and grounds to be recorded, may:
 - (i) Suspend the Access Pass for a specified period not exceeding 6 months;
 - (ii) Cancel or revoke the Access Pass;
 - (iii) Recommend to cancel or revoke the Registration Certificate of the fishing vessel.
- (c) The Issuing Authority may suspend or cancel an Access Pass in the interest of law and order, maritime security, or public interest, without prejudice to other penalties.
- (d) In the case of suspension of an Access Pass, the operator shall immediately ensure that fishing or fishing-related activities of such vessel is stopped until the suspension is revoked in writing.
- (e) The suspended or cancelled Access Pass shall no longer be used. The status of such suspended or cancelled Access Pass shall be updated on ReALCRaft by the Issuing Authority.
- (f) The pecuniary penalties imposed by the Adjudicating Officer under these rules shall be recovered by the State as arrears of public revenue due on land, with the exercise of powers of the Collector and District Magistrate under the land revenue laws of the respective States.

17. Appeals

- (a) Any person aggrieved by an order of the Issuing Authority or Verifying Officer refusing, cancelling, or suspending an Access Pass or penalties imposed under rule 16 may appeal to the Appellate Authority within 30 days of the communication of the order.
- (b) The Appellate Authority shall hear the appeal after giving a reasonable opportunity to the party to be heard and issue a final order expeditiously.
- (c) The Appellate Authority may review records of orders passed by the Adjudicating Officer, against which no appeal has been filed within the period of three months, to ensure legality, propriety, or procedural regularity, provided no prejudicial order is passed without giving the affected person a reasonable opportunity to be heard.
- (d) The Orders of the Appellate Authority shall be final.

18. Powers of Adjudicating Officer and Appellate Authority

The Adjudicating Officer and Appellate Authority, while holding inquiries, shall require the owner or operator or the Authorised Officer to produce the documents and records of the fishing vessel, and obtain any such evidence related to the offences as deemed fit.

19. Protection of Action Taken in Good Faith

No suit, prosecution, or legal proceeding shall lie against the Authorising Officer, Adjudicating Officer, Issuing Authority, Appellate Authority, or any person, or the Government for actions taken in good faith under these rules.

20. Remittance of Revenue

All revenue earned under these Guidelines shall be remitted to *Bharat Kosh*.

21. Institutional Mechanism

The Central Government shall, by notification, establish an Inter-Ministerial Committee and advise the States to constitute State-level Committees to oversee the implementation of these rules for the sustainable harnessing of marine fisheries resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

SCHEDULE I

Application Format for Access Pass

1. Name of the company/ operator/ FFPO/ Fisheries Cooperative 2. Registration No. of the Company/ FFPO/ Fisheries Cooperatives	:	
3. Address of the company / operator/ FFPO/ Fisheries Cooperative 4. Aadhaar Card No. 5. PAN Card No. 6. Mobile No. 7. Email 8. Website	:	
9. Name of the fishing vessel	:	
10. Registration No. of Fishing Vessel: 11. IMO No. (as applicable) 12. International Call Sign (as applicable) 13. MMSI No. / AIS No. 14. Transponder No. 15. Type of fishing or fishing-related activities proposed: (i). Purse Seine fishing (ii). Long Line fishing (iii). Gillnet cum Longline fishing (v). Gillnet fishing (v). Pole and line fishing (vi). Handline fishing (vii). Trolling fishing (viii). Mid-water pelagic trawling (ix). Squid jigging, (x). Others_ please specify	:	
16. Access Pass duration	:	From To
17 Base Port	:	
18. Specifications of Fishing Vessel: -	:	
(i). Overall Length	:	
(ii). Breadth	:	
(iii). HP of the Engine	:	
(iv). Gross Tonnage	:	
(v). Net Tonnage	:	
(vi). Fish Hold capacity	:	
(vii). Engine Details	:	
(viii). Fuel capacity	:	

	(ix). Year of Built	:	
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Declaration

We, M/s [Name], undertake that our vessel(s) will not engage in destructive fishing practices, including pair trawling (bull trawling), juvenile fishing, use of artificial light or LED fishing, or fishing of endangered species as notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The vessel(s) will operate only for the type and area of fishing permitted under these rules and comply with applicable conservation and management measures adopted by the concerned RFMO in keeping with the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention 1982, United Nations Fish Stock Agreement 1995, and other such international instruments to which India is party. In case of violation, the Government may impose penalties as per the Rules and suspend or cancel the Access Pass.

I confirm that the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

.....

Signature of the Applicant

.....

Date and Place

Application Processing Fee (to be submitted Online_ReALCRaft portal)

- (a) Mechanized fishing vessels of less than 15 m OAL and motorised fishing vessels: ₹3,000/-
- (b) Mechanised fishing vessels of 15–23.9 m OAL: ₹5,000/-
- (c) Mechanised fishing vessels of 24 m OAL and above: ₹7,500/-

SCHEDULE II

Format for Access Pass

Access Pass No.: [Number]

Valid From: [Date] To: [Date]

Vessel & Operator Details

1. Name of the owner/ operator :
2. Address & Mobile No :
3. Name and Registration No. of the Vessel :
4. Port of Registry :
5. Overall Length :
6. Base Port :

Conditions of Access Pass

This vessel is permitted to operate solely for the type of fishing and area specified, within the Exclusive Economic Zone of India, under the **Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India Rules, 2025**.

Prohibited Activities

- A. Shrimp trawling (where applicable)
- B. Pair trawling (bull trawling)
- C. Fishing of endangered species as notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972

Any violation of these conditions or the provisions of the rules or notifications issued under the rules, will result in penalties, including suspension or cancellation of the Access Pass.

Issuing Authority

Authorised Signatory:

Designation:

Seal and Signature

Date of Issue:

Place:

SCHEDULE III

Details of Mother Vessel, Quantum of Catch, and Species for Transhipment

1. Name of the Mother vessel :
2. Access Pass No. :
3. Name of the Donor Vessel/s :
4. Access Pass No/s. :
5. Name & Contact of the Operator / Owner of the Mother Vessel :
6. Proposed Date and Time of Transhipment :
7. Coordinates (Latitude & Longitude) :
8. Port of Landing

Details of Catch

Name of Species	Quantity (in Tonnes)	Preservation Method

Declaration

We declare that the above details are true and accurate and that the transhipment complies with all relevant rules, including the Reserve Bank of India Guidelines and the **Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India Rules, 2025**.

Signature of the Donor Vessel
Owner
Name

Signature of the Mother Vessel
Owner
Name