

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

NOTIFICATION

New Delhi, the 4th November, 2025

G.S.R. 818(E).— In exercise of the powers conferred by section 15 read with clause (a) of sub-section (4) of section 7 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, namely:

1. Short title, application, and commencement. - (1) These rules may be called the Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone Rules, 2025.

(2) These rules shall apply to fishing and fishing-related activities in the exclusive economic zone.

(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;
- (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, not below the rank of Assistant Director, specified by the concerned State Government or Union territory Administration;
- (d) “Authorised Officer” means any officer authorised by the Central Government by notification for the purposes of these rules;
- (e) “Appellate Authority” means an Officer, not below the rank of Joint Secretary in the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, specified by the Central Government;

- (f) “fish” means finfish, molluscs, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animals and plants excluding marine mammals, reptiles, and seabirds;
- (g) “fishing” means searching for, trailing, pursuing, attracting, catching, taking, or harvesting fish by any method;
- (h) “fishing-related activities” means landing, packaging, marketing, processing, preserving, storing, live transportation of fish, transshipping, or transporting fish not previously landed at a port;
- (i) “fishing vessel” means a ship or boat which is exclusively engaged in sea-fishing for profit;
- (j) “Issuing Authority” means an officer not below the rank of Deputy Director in the Department of Fisheries in the Central Government, designated for issuing access pass to fishing vessels for fishing and fishing related activities in the exclusive economic zone;
- (k) “mechanised fishing vessel” means a fishing vessel with an engine fitted to the hull or on board, which use machine power for propulsion and fishing operation like casting and pulling nets or operating lines;
- (l) “motorised fishing vessel” means a fishing vessel with an engine, fitted inside or outside, used solely for propulsion and not for fishing operations;
- (m) “operator” means an individual or enterprise, or Fish Farmer Producer Organisations or Fisheries Cooperatives (including multi-state cooperatives), controls the operation or management of a fishing vessel or who has assumed the responsibility for its operation;
- (n) “owner” in relation to a fishing vessel means the owner of the vessel or any other person, including an any organisation or association of persons, whether incorporated or not, by whom the fishing vessel or a share in the vessel is owned and includes a mortgage, lessee or other person in actual possession of the fishing vessel;
- (o) “Registrar of the fishing vessel” means the Registrar appointed under section 435E of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (44 of 1958);
- (p) “Registration and Licensing of Fishing Craft” or “ReALCRaft” means the web-enabled application portal established by the Central Government for registering fishing vessel and for issuance of access pass;
- (q) “State” means a State Government or a Union territory Administration with a coastal line;
- (r) “Verifying Officer” means an officer of the State designated by the Central Government in consultation with them for verifying documents and for physical inspection of fishing vessel for grant of access pass.

(2) Words and expressions used herein and not defined but 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 respectively assigned to them in those Acts.

3. Access pass. –(1) All motorised fishing vessel having overall length of twenty-four meters and above and mechanised fishing vessel shall have an access pass to operate in the exclusive economic zone.

(2) No access pass shall be required for motorised fishing vessel having overall length less than twenty-four metres except those exclusively engaged in fishing of tuna and tuna like species.

(3) The fishing vessel operating in the exclusive economic zone shall comply with the sea safety requirements, monitoring, control, and surveillance; and conservation and management measures.

4. Process for issuing access pass. – (1) The owner of a registered fishing vessel may make an application through the ReALCRaft portal in Form I to the Verifying Officer for grant of access pass for using such fishing vessel for fishing and fishing related activities in the exclusive economic zone.

(2) The access pass shall be issued in Form II subject to the fitness and seaworthiness of the fishing vessel as per the provisions of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (44 of 1958).

(3) The Verifying Officer of the concerned port shall verify the application, including the validity and authenticity of documents, within two weeks and forward it to the Issuing Authority.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this sub-rule, “port” means a port, fishing harbour, or fish landing centre designated by the Central Government or State.

(4) If the Verifying Officer fails to submit the verified application and supporting documents within two weeks, the pendency status shall automatically be escalated to the Issuing Authority.

(5) The Issuing Authority may after making such enquiry as he deems fit, either grant or refuse to grant access pass, within five to ten working days, for using the fishing vessel for fishing and fishing related activities in the specified area.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this sub-rule, “specified area” means an area specified for fishing or fishing-related activities in the exclusive economic zone by the Issuing Authority.

(6) Every access pass issued or renewed by the Issuing Authority shall be in Form II, which shall be downloadable by the applicant from the ReALCRaft portal.

(7) The access pass issued under sub-rule (6) shall specify the applicable terms and conditions to be complied with by the operator or owner of the fishing vessel.

(8) Where an application for access pass has been refused, the applicant shall be informed of the reasons for such refusal.

(9) The owner or the operator, as the case may be, 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 Authorised Officer.

(10) An access pass shall be non-transferable, non-assignable, and shall be vessel-specific.

(11) If the Issuing Authority is satisfied either on a reference made to him in this behalf or otherwise, that an access pass has been obtained by fraud or misrepresentation as to essential fact, he may after giving the holder of the access pass a reasonable opportunity of showing cause, cancel or suspend the access pass.

5. Validity and renewal of access pass. – (1) An access pass shall remain valid for a period of three years from the date of its issuance.

(2) The owner of the fishing vessel may apply for renewal at least thirty days prior to the expiry of the existing access pass through ReALCRaft portal.

(3) Where an application for renewal of access pass has been refused, the applicant shall be informed of the reasons for such refusal in writing.

6. Monitoring, control, and surveillance. – (1) The fishing vessel with an access pass shall operate from and return to its base port for fish landing.

(2) In the event of a fishing vessel intending to enter any port other than that referred to as its base port, it shall be intimated to the Registrar of the fishing vessel, the Issuing Authority, and the Authorised Officers.

(3) If a fishing vessel is seized or detained by the authorities of any other country, then the vessel owner or operator shall promptly report it to the State Fisheries Department and the Issuing Authority.

(4) On receipt of information under sub-rule (3), the State Fisheries Department shall take necessary steps in accordance with the Standard Operation Protocol for Vessel Communication and Support System promulgated in this regard by the Central Government, from time to time.

(4) The fishing vessel shall comply with requirements prescribed under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 (44 of 1958) and the rules made thereunder.

(5) The fishing vessel shall transmit its details to the designated State Fisheries Department monitoring stations in accordance with the Standard Operation Protocol for Vessel Communication and Support System promulgated in this regard by the Central Government, from time to time.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this rule, “base port” means the port of operation of the fishing vessel indicated in the access pass.

7. Inspection and enforcement. – (1) The Authorised Officer shall be responsible for monitoring, control, and surveillance of a fishing vessel out at sea.

(2) The Authorised Officer shall report any violation in writing to the Issuing Authority, the Adjudicating Officer, and the Registrar of the fishing vessel concerned, in such manner as specified by the Central Government.

8. Fisheries management plans. – (1) The Central Government, in consultation with scientific institutions, coastal States, fishers and their associations shall specify fisheries management plans following ecosystem approach 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.

(2) The Central Government, in consultation with scientific institutions, coastal States, fishers and their associations, shall take steps for mariculture, including seaweed cultivation in the exclusive economic zone and shall promote measures to reduce fishing pressure, create additional livelihoods, and enhance production from the sea.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this sub-rule, “mariculture” means the culture of marine aquatic organisms, including fish, molluscs, crustaceans and aquatic plants.

(3) The fisheries management plan under sub-rule (1) and sub-rule (2) may include, but not be limited to, the following management actions, namely: -

- (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 vessel or participants in a fishery;
- (v) bycatch reduction measures;
- (vi) optimum utilisation of conventional and non-conventional oceanic fisheries resources such as oceanic squids, myctophids;
- (vii) measures to address marine pollution, abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear 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 vessel;
- (x) identification and protection of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH), including spawning, breeding, and feeding grounds;
- (xi) conservation and management measures as declared by the Central Government from time to time; and
- (xii) conservation of fish stocks or rejuvenation measures such as sea ranching, installation of artificial reefs.

(4) All fishing vessel engaged in fishing and fishing-related activities in the exclusive economic zone shall comply with the fisheries management plans issued under sub-rule (1).

(5) The Central Government shall take steps to provide training and capacity-building of traditional and small-scale fishers including fisheries cooperatives, Self Help Groups and Fish Farmer Producer Organisations to enhance skills for deep sea fishing and value-chain efficiencies.

9. Origin of catch. – (1) The fish harvested by Indian fishing vessel operating in the exclusive economic zone 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.

(2) The fish caught in the exclusive economic zone by an Indian fishing vessel and landed at foreign port shall be classified as exports and shall be governed by applicable laws and regulations.

(3) The Registrar of the fishing vessel concerned and any such other authority as specified by the Central Government shall be responsible for the verification of the catch-related data, duly authenticated by the skipper of the vessel and shall be recorded in the manner as provided in rule 12.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this sub-rule, “skipper” means a person having command or charge of a fishing vessel or responsibility for its operation.

10. Catch and health certificate. – (1) The Marine Products Export Development Authority and the Export Inspection Council may issue catch certificate and health certificate, respectively, to the fish caught by the fishing vessel for the purposes of traceability, compliance with sanitary standards, and eco-labelling, in accordance with applicable national and international regulations.

(2) The applications for catch certificate and health certificate 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.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this rule, –

- (a) “Export Inspection Council” means the export certification body established under section 3 of the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963 (22 of 1963);
- (b) “catch certificate” means the certificate issued by the Marine Products Export Development Authority or such other authority as specified by the Central Government from time to time, accompanying a consignment of fish or fishery products to provide accurate and verifiable information concerning fish passing through the supply chain;
- (c) “Marine Products Export Development Authority” means the authority established under the Marine Products Export Development Authority Act, 1972 (13 of 1972).

11. Mid-sea transshipment. – (1) The operator or owner of fishing vessel with an access pass may undertake mid-sea transshipment to a mother vessel in accordance with the applicable measures of the Regional Fisheries Management Organisation concerned and the relevant guidelines of the Reserve Bank of India as promulgated from time to time.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this sub-rule, “mother vessel” means a vessel, also termed as a carrier vessel, receiver vessel, or factory vessel, that supports fishing vessel 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.

(2) The operator or owner shall intimate the Issuing Authority, the Registrar of the fishing vessel and the Indian Coast Guard at least forty-eight hours in advance, providing details of the mother vessel, quantity of catch, species, and transshipment date, time, and coordinates, in Form III.

12. Catch reporting. – (1) The fishing vessel shall furnish such fishery data to the Registrar of the fishing vessels, Authorised Officer, Issuing Authority, or other authorities in such format and at such periodical intervals as may be specified by the Central Government.

(2) The Central Government may specify the format for voyage reports for different types of fishing vessel, which may, *inter alia*, include the details of fish catch, fish species, numbers, weight, fishing areas, and trip duration.

13. 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 specified by the Central Government, from time to time.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this rule, “fisher” means fishermen and fisherwomen engaged in fishing and fishing-related activities for livelihood or profit, includes fish workers.

14. Prohibition of destructive fishing, juvenile fishing, and no-fishing zones. – The Central Government, in consultation with the States and Scientific Institutions, shall regulate, restrict, and prohibit in the exclusive economic zone of India (beyond territorial waters), the following activities, namely: -

- (a) use of dynamite, explosives, poisons, noxious chemicals, or other destructive materials or methods, including pair trawling or bull trawling;
- (b) use or installation or operation of surface or submerged artificial lights or LED lights, fish light attractors or any other light equipment with or without generator on mechanised fishing vessel or motorised fishing craft for trawling, purse-seining, and gill netting operations;
- (c) capture of juvenile fish or related activities;
- (d) fishing in ‘No Fishing Zones’ or such ‘designated areas’ as notified by the Central Government from time to time; and
- (e) fishing during the ban period imposed by the Central Government from time to time.

Explanation. – For the purposes of this rule, “juvenile fish” means a species of fish that is below the scientifically determined minimum legal size as specified in the Fisheries Management Plan(s) specified from time to time.

15. Prohibition of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. – The Central Government shall issue a National Plan of Action to prevent, deter, and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, which the vessels operating in the exclusive economic zone shall comply with.

16. Compliance with Regional Fisheries Management Organisation and International Instruments. – The fishing and fishing-related activities shall be in compliance with relevant conservation and management measures of the concerned Regional Fisheries Management Organisations to which India is a party.

17. Enquiry to be made by Adjudicating Officer. –(1) Where an Authorised Officer has reason to believe that any fishing vessel is being, or has been, used in contravention of any of the provisions of these rules or any of the conditions of the access pass, he shall make a report thereof to the Adjudicating Officer.

(2) On receipt of a report from the Authorised Officer regarding contraventions of the provisions of these rules or conditions of the access pass, the Adjudicating Officer shall hold an enquiry after giving all the parties concerned a reasonable period of being heard.

18. Violations and penalties. – (1) The Adjudicating Officer shall, after enquiry under sub-rule (2) of rule 17, decide whether any person has used or caused or allowed to be used any fishing vessel in contravention of any of the provisions of these rules or any of the conditions of the access pass, he may by order in writing, impose such penalty, as follows:–

- (a) In the case of motorised and mechanised fishing vessel of less than 15 metres of overall length, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding five thousand rupees, and for subsequent contravention, a penalty which may extend to fifteen thousand rupees.
- (b) In the case of mechanised fishing vessel of more than 15 metres of length and less than 24 metres of overall length, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding ten thousand rupees, and for subsequent contravention, a penalty which may extend to twenty-five thousand rupees.
- (c) In the case of mechanised fishing vessel of 24 metres and above of overall length, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding thirty thousand rupees, and for subsequent contravention, a penalty which may extend to fifty thousand rupees.

(2) In addition to any penalty that may be imposed under sub-rule (1), the Adjudicating Officer may direct to–

- (a) suspend the access pass of the fishing vessel for a specified period not exceeding six months; or
- (b) cancel or revoke the access pass, as the case may be.

(3) In 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.

(4) The suspended or cancelled access pass shall no longer be used and the status of such suspended or cancelled access pass shall be updated on ReALCRaft by the Issuing Authority.

(5) 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 State.

19. Appeals. –(1) Any person aggrieved by an order of the Issuing Authority under rules 4 or 5 or against any order passed by the Adjudicating Officer under rule 18, may appeal to the Appellate Authority within thirty days of the communication of the order.

(2) The Appellate Authority shall, hear the appeal after giving a reasonable opportunity to the parties, issue a final order expeditiously.

(3) The Appellate Authority may *suo motu* review the order 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.

20. Powers of Adjudicating Officer and Appellate Authority. –The Adjudicating Officer and Appellate Authority, while holding the 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.

21. Remittance of revenue. - All revenue earned under these rules shall be remitted to *Bharat Kosh* or as may be specified by the Central Government.

[F. No. UI/251/10/2025]

ACQUINO VIMAL, Jt. Secy.

Form I

Application Format for access pass

(See rule 4 (1))

1.	1. Name of the owner /FFPO/SHG/Fisheries Cooperative/Company 2. Registration No.	:	
2.	3. Address of the owner /FFPO/SHG/Fisheries Cooperative/Company 4. GST No./CIN (in case of companies) 5. Aadhaar Card No. 6. PAN Card No. 7. Mobile No. 8. Email 9. Website	:	
3.	10. Name of the fishing vessel	:	
4.	11. Registration No. of Fishing Vessel: 12. Port of Registry: 13. IMO No. (as applicable) 14. International Call Sign (as applicable) 15. MMSI No. / AIS No. (as applicable) 16. Transponder / VMS No. 17. Crew Capacity 18. Type of fishing or fishing-related activities proposed: (i) Purse Seine fishing (ii) Long Line fishing (iii) Gillnet cum Longline fishing (v) Gillnet fishing (vi) Pole and line fishing (vi) Handline fishing (vii) Trolling fishing (viii) Mid-water pelagic trawling (ix) Squid jigging, (x) Others please specify	:	
5.	19. Access pass duration	:	From To
	20. (i) Base port, and (ii) Proposed area of fishing		
6.	21. 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	:	

Declaration

We, M/s [Name], undertake that our fishing vessel [vessel Name] intended for 'access pass' shall not engage in destructive fishing practices, such as pair trawling (bull trawling), juvenile fishing, use of artificial light or LED light for fishing, or fishing of endangered or protected species as notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The fishing vessel shall operate strictly using the type of fishing methods and in areas of fishing permitted under the Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone of India Rules, 2025 and shall comply with the rules and applicable conservation and management measures adopted by the concerned Regional Fisheries Management Organisation such as Indian Ocean Tuna Commission and other such regional or 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

Form II

Format for access pass*(See rule 4 (6))***Access pass No.: [Number]****Valid from: [Date] To: [Date]****Fresh/Renewed**

Fishing vessel and operator details

1. Name of the owner :
2. Address and mobile No :
3. Name and registration No. of the fishing vessel, type of fishing permitted :
4. Port of registry :
5. Overall length :
6. Base port :
7. Area of fishing :
8. Call sign

Terms and conditions of access pass

This fishing 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 and to follow the stipulations applicable under these Rules including regulation of Fishing and Fishing-related Activities (rule 3), Monitoring, Control, and Surveillance (rule 4), Fisheries Management Plans (rule 6), Mid-Sea Transshipment (rule 9), Catch Reporting (rule 10), Fishers and Crew Identity (rule 11), Prohibition of Destructive Fishing, Juvenile Fishing, and No-Fishing Zones (rule 12), Prohibition of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (rule 13), Compliance with Regional Fisheries Management Organisation and International Instruments (rule 14), and Fishing of endangered species as notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Any violation of these conditions or the provisions of the rules or orders or instructions issued under these rules, which shall result in penalties, including suspension or cancellation of the access pass.

Issuing Authority

Seal and Signature

Date of Issue:

Place:

Form III

Details of mother vessel, quantum of catch, and species for transhipment*(See rule 11 (2))*

1. Name of the mother vessel :
2. Access pass No. :
3. Name of the donor vessel/s :
4. Access pass No/s. :
5. Name and contact of the owner of the mother vessel :
6. Proposed date and time of transhipment :
7. Coordinates (Latitude and 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