

Centre notifies rules for deep-sea fishing

Rules for sustainable harnessing of fisheries in EEZ aims to give priority to fishermen cooperative societies, fish farmer producer organisations

The Hindu Bureau

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The Union Government on Saturday notified the rules for 'Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)' to give priority to fishermen cooperative societies and fish farmer producer organisations (FFPOs) for undertaking deep-sea fishing operations and managing technologically advanced vessels. "The EEZ rules will not only facilitate deep-sea fishing but will also contribute to enhancing seafood exports by emphasising value addition, traceability, and certification," the Union Fisheries Ministry said in a release.

The rules has defined "operator" as an individual or enterprise, or FFPOs or Fisheries Cooperatives (including multi-state cooperatives), that controls the operation or management of a fishing vessel or who has assumed the responsibility for its operation.

The rules added that the Centre would take steps to provide training and capacity-building of traditional and small-scale fishers including fisheries cooperatives, Self Help Groups and FFPOs to enhance skills for deep sea fishing and value-chain efficiencies.

The Ministry said the initiative is expected to open new horizons for the country's marine fisheries sec-



Sea of change: The Ministry said the initiative is expected to open new horizons for the country's marine fisheries sector. FILE PHOTO

tor through the creation of modern infrastructure and the introduction of the mother-and-child vessel concept, allowing mid-sea transshipment under an effective monitoring mechanism of RBI regulations. "In island regions of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, which together account for 49% of India's EEZ area, the use of mother and child vessels will give boost to the export of high-quality fish," the Ministry said.

A spokesman for the Seafood Exporters Association of India said the rules should define juvenile and illegal fishing and must ensure that a proper catch certification is provided by the Marine Products Export Development Authority. "We need to have a proper catch certification and the country must promote sustainable fishing practices to help us get new markets," he said.

The rules prescribe that 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. The Centre said the EEZ Rules take a firm stand against harmful fishing practices such as LED light fishing, pair trawling and bull trawling to protect the marine ecosystem and ensure equitable fishing opportunities.

"To conserve biodiversity, a minimum legal size for fish species will also be prescribed and Fisheries Management Plans will be developed in consultation with stakeholders including State governments to restore declining fish stocks. Mariculture practices such as sea-cage farming and seaweed cultivation will also be promoted as alternate livelihoods in order to reduce fishing pressure in nearshore areas while increasing production without compromising environmental integrity," it said.