

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO - 1973
ANSWERED ON 05/08/2026

**MODERNISATION OF DEEP-SEA FISHING AND DUTY-FREE CATCH FRAMEWORK
IN EEZ**

1973. SHRI KESRIDEVSINH JHALA:
DR. ANIL SUKHDEORAO BONDE:

Will the Minister of FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING be pleased to state:

- (a) status of guidelines notified following the Union Budget 2026-27 to accord Indian-origin status and import duty exemptions for fish harvested by domestic vessels within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) or High Seas;
- (b) strategic framework adopted for the mother-child vessel model to facilitate mid-sea transshipment and augment the earnings of deep-sea fishing operations;
- (c) whether digitised issuance of health and catch certificates via integrated portals has been operationalised to bolster product traceability and adherence to international standards;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the comprehensive initiatives implemented to enhance deep-sea harvesting potential while optimising price realisation and the global market competitiveness of Indian marine exports?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING
(SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ALIAS LALAN SINGH)

(a) To create new export opportunities beyond territorial waters for fishers, it was announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 that fish catch by any Indian vessel in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of India or in the High Seas will be made free of duty; the landing of such fish at foreign ports will be treated as export of goods, and safeguards will be put in place to prevent misuse during fish catch transit or transshipment. In pursuance of the Budget announcement (2026-27), necessary amendments have been made in the Customs Act, 1962 to extend its jurisdiction to international waters for Indian-flagged fishing vessels. It makes fish caught by the Indian-flagged fishing vessels in the EEZ or high seas duty-free when brought to India, and treats such fish landings at foreign ports as exports. The three key legislative amendments to the Customs Act, 1962 include amendment in Section 1(2), amendment in Section 2(28A) and insertion of Section 56A.

(b) In pursuance of the Union Budget 2025-26 announcement to bring in an enabling framework for sustainable harnessing of fisheries from the Indian EEZ and the High Seas, with special focus on island territories such as Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, the “*Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone Rules, 2025*” and the “*Guidelines for Sustainable Harnessing of Fisheries in the High Seas by Indian-Flagged Fishing Vessels, 2025*” have been issued on 04th November, 2025 and 9th December 2025, respectively. The EEZ Rules, 2025 and the High Seas Guidelines, 2025 provide the regulation related to mid-sea transshipment via a "mother-and-child vessel" model. This framework allows smaller fishing boats (child units) to transfer catches to large carrier mother vessels at sea under the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) monitoring and Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (RFMO) compliance. The transshipment is allowed under the EEZ Rules, only between the Indian vessels, to maintain and improve the quality standards of fish to ensure better returns to fishers and exporters. The provision on transshipment is very useful for scattered islands in UTs of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar, where adequate berthing, processing and supporting infrastructure are limited. By enabling the collectivisation of catch, the Rules support more efficient handling and processing of marine products.

(c) & (d): The Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry is the designated authority to validate the Catch Certificates for exports to European Union (EU) and non-EU markets. In 2019, MPEDA introduced an end-to-end online system to validate these certificates, reducing processing time from 7–10 days to 1–2 days. Further, MPEDA's Catch Certificate issuance system has been integrated with the ReALCraft portal of the Department of Fisheries. The provisions for reporting of fish catch has also been made in the *Nabhmitra* Application to facilitate marine fishers’ ease of doing business. The Export Inspection Council (EIC) under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, issues health certificates for notified commodities, including Fish & Fishery Products ensuring compliance with importing country requirements. To promote ease of doing business, the EIC has digitized the process through an online system, enabling transparent, traceable and swift issuance of health certificates. The certificates are issued in compliance with international market requirements, enabling exporters to apply and receive certificates online, thereby improving efficiency and ease of doing business.

(e) The Department of Fisheries, Government of India, is implementing various schemes for the holistic development of the Fisheries Sector. Under the schemes of Blue Revolution, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF), projects amounting to Rs.1,314.81 crore have been sanctioned for the acquisition of 1,205 deep-sea fishing vessels by traditional fishers. Further, the EEZ Rules, 2025 was notified to promote high-value, export-oriented fisheries in the EEZ. To optimize price realization, the

Government is promoting value addition, product diversification and export-oriented aquaculture. Special emphasis is being placed on the production and export of high-value species, development of value-added seafood products, strengthening of processing facilities and compliance with international quality and food safety standards. MPEDA is implementing initiatives for market promotion, participation in international seafood exhibitions, buyer-seller meets and branding of Indian seafood products in key export markets. To strengthen India's seafood sector globally, the government is facilitating ease of business by amending regulations, streamlining imports, and reducing import duties on key aquafeed ingredients, aquaculture inputs, and fish processing ingredients. As part of its sustainable efforts, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, is promoting the installation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in trawl nets, supporting the marine mammals project, strengthening antibiotic residue controls, and has launched a comprehensive National Traceability Framework. The Export Inspection Council (EIC), was established by the Government of India under the Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963, to promote India's export trade through quality control and inspection of notified products, including shrimp, to ensure compliance with the requirements of importing countries. In addition, the Government continues to engage with importing countries for addressing sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) issues, export certification requirements and market access barriers, while strengthening laboratory infrastructure, residue monitoring and quality control systems to ensure compliance with international standards.

As a result of various well-thought-out policies and initiatives of the Government of India, India's seafood exports have more than doubled, from Rs.30,213 crore in 2013-14 to Rs.73,890.46 crore in 2025-26.
