

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.2107
ANSWERED ON 15.12.2023

UNLICENCED FERRY SERVICES

2107. SHRI PRADYUT BORDOLOI:

Will the Minister of PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS be pleased to state:

पत्तन, पोतपरिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्री

- (a) whether the Government has any data on the number of ferry accidents that have taken place in the country in 2022-23;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (c) whether the Government has any data on the number of unlicensed inland water ferries and ferries without proper safety measures in place; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof, State-wise along with the remedial measures taken by the Government in this regard?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
(SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

(a) & (b) Data on the number of ferry accidents that have taken place in the country in 2022-23 are not maintained by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)/Central Government. The non-mechanically propelled inland vessels/boats and operation of ferry service are in the domain of State Governments

(c) Unlicensed inland water ferries and ferries without proper safety measures are in the purview of concerned State Governments. No such data is maintained by Central Government.

(d) The Central Government has framed rules under the Inland Vessels Act, 2021 for Life Saving Appliances and Fire fighting Appliances to be carried on board the inland vessels registered under this Act, and also prescribed Safe Navigation and, Communication and Signals Rules 2022, the responsibility of the implementation of rules and regulations related to safety of inland vessels primarily rests with the State Governments. The responsibility of issue of Survey and Registration Certificates of inland vessels plying in rivers, lakes etc. also lies with the State Governments as per Inland Vessels Act, 2021.

The compulsory safety devices while ferrying passengers and goods as listed in National Disaster Management Guidelines on Boat Safety (September 2017) issued by NDMA, Govt. of India is at **Annexure-1** for strict adherence by the concerned States as the operation of Ferries is mandated with States as per State Ferry Acts.

Excerpts from National Disaster Management Guidelines on Boat Safety issued in September 2017 by National Disaster Management Authority

3.4 Safety standards for Non-mechanized Boats

3.4.1 Life Saving Equipment

Every boat should have approved lifesaving equipment sufficient for the number of persons that can be carried. IRS/MMD approved lifesaving appliances such as life jackets, life buoy etc. confirming to latest SOLAS/LSA Code requirement along with identification/marketing details on the product.

3.4.1.1 Life buoys

It is recommended that at least one lifebuoy should be provided for every 5 passengers, with a minimum of 2 lifebuoys on the boat.

3.4.1.2 Life jackets:

In general, life jackets are not required for boats operating in the calm water. However, it is recommended that as a good practice, passengers should be provided life jackets before the journey begins. All the lifesaving appliances should be properly maintained and periodically serviced based on the recommendations by the manufacturing company.

3.4.1.3 First Aid Box should be kept essentially in every boat with all the emergency first aid equipment and medications to be used in case of emergency.

3.4.2 Fire Safety

At least one multipurpose portable fire extinguisher of a recognized standard should be carried in all the vessels navigating in inland waterways. In order to prevent fire accidents, it is strongly suggested that the following items should be prohibited to be carried on boats.

- a) Lamps powered by liquefied gas or liquid oil
- b) Vaporizing oil burner stoves
- c) Solid fuel heaters
- d) Devices fitted with wick burners
- e) Liquefied gas devices

All the boat operators should display posters on board indicating items prohibited to be carried in the vessels. Smoking shall be strictly prohibited in the boats.

3.4.3 Navigation and Communication

3.4.3.1. Navigation lights and Sound signals

The Vessels operating at night should be equipped with navigation lights as required by the local authority. This may enable ferry/vessels operators to get acquaintance with the routes or possible dangers during navigation. The appropriate sound signaling equipment should also be provided in all vessels.

3.4.3.2. Communication Equipment

In order to disseminate distress communication, all boat operators should carry emergency communication equipment. The mobile phones are normally sufficient for this purpose provided operation area has signal coverage. In other cases portable VHF may be required. The authorities to be informed in case of emergency should be clearly indicated on board. The communication equipment for receiving weather forecast and warnings are also essential depending on the area of operation. This may be arranged at the landing points onshore and boat operators be informed by the administrative authorities.

3.4.4. Anchoring and Mooring

In order to prevent drifting of vessels in the area of operations during calm weather in general and cyclonic conditions in particular, it is essential to keep suitable anchoring equipment on board like Anchors, Cables and Ropes etc. The anchoring arrangements may be helpful for holding the boats especially during unstable weather conditions. The Mooring arrangements consisting of bollards or cleats and mooring ropes are to be provided suitably for the vessel.

3.5. Safety standards for Mechanized Boats

In mechanized boats, safety standards must be followed as the top priority especially to ensure that machinery failure is avoided to avert potential disasters. It must also be ensured that propulsion machinery is reliable and may not be stranded in mid waterways due to machinery failure. An important safety measure for mechanized boats is the possibility to apply reverse thrust which may be achieved by means of gears that may enable boat operators to quickly stop the boat for avoiding possible collision. In addition, prevention of fire and explosion in boats should also be ensured important safety measures for mechanical boats.

In order to maintain general safety measures in mechanized boats, the major thrust should be on protecting people from the imminent danger of machineries. The moving parts and hot surfaces are to be protected so as to minimize danger to people during normal movement of vessels. All fuel tank vents should be fitted with 'flame gauze' and carried above the tank top level, to above a height of personnel standing next to the engine or to a level where there is no danger of escaping fuel or vapour. A valve or cock, which can be shut from a position outside the engine space should be fitted in the fuel feed pipe, as close to the fuel tanks as possible. Petrol tanks for outboard motors should have quick connection shutoff devices.

3.5.1 Safety measures for fuel storage

In mechanized boats, safety measures for fuel storage tanks should be undertaken with utmost caution and safety. The following precautions are recommended for fire safety of storage tanks in mechanized boats.

- The storage container should be composed of metal and fitted in such a manner that the possibility of leaks/spills may be averted.
- The container should be stored upright and secured to prevent shifting or fall over with the movement of the vessel. They should also be located away from the direct sources of heat and should be made of fire resistant materials.

- The container should be properly labeled according to contents like materials stored, hazard signs, no smoking/ignition sources etc.

3.5.2 Safety Measures for Petrol Engines and Petrol Fuels

The fixed petrol tanks of more than 2.5 liters should not be located within one meter of any engine or heating appliance unless insulated and protected by fire resistant materials. It is recommended not to use glass or plastic fuel sight gauges. The fuel level indicators should be designed in such a way that it should not allow fuel to escape in the event of damage. All the fixed fuel feed pipes should be of metallic type. The flexible pipes should be of fire resistant materials.

3.5.3 Charging Devices

Arrangements of charging facilities for batteries should be ensured on board, so that boats machineries are started /operated through batteries smoothly. In other boats where battery is the sole means of starting the engine, provisions be made duplicate batteries with change over switches for emergency uses.

3.5.4 Lighting Arrangements

When lighting within the vessel is provided through a centralized electrical system, an alternative source of lighting should be provided for emergency use. This may be ensured by means of torches provided on board. Alternative source of lighting is to be ensured for the movement of people, deployment of life saving appliances and to work on essential machinery.

3.5.5 Steering Arrangements

Each vessel should be provided with effective means of steering. Emergency steering arrangements are recommended where there are safety risks of passengers due to main steering failure. This may be in the form of a tiller which can be attached to the rudder stock or steering oars depending on the area of operation.

3.5.6 Bilge Pumping/ Drainage Arrangements

All the vessels plying in the waterways should have means of bilge pumping either by a power driven pump or a hand pump so that all compartments can be drained during emergency. In machinery spaces, a holding tank is recommended for oily bilges to prevent water pollution. In case of small open boats operating in areas with small wave height of less than 0.6 m, drainage with the help of bailers or buckets may be sufficient.

3.5.7 Life Saving Equipment

Each boat should have approved lifesaving equipment sufficient for the number of persons that can be carried on board. IRS/MMD approved lifesaving appliances such as life jackets, life buoy etc. conforming to latest SOLAS/LSA Code requirement along with identification/markings details on the product (Also Refer Annexure-I to Chapter 3 for details). It should be mandatory to keep the following life saving equipment on every mechanized boats/vessels.

- **3.5.7.1 Life Buoys**

A minimum of 4 Life Buoys for vessels up to 25 meter length, 6 Life Buoys for vessels of 25 to 45 meters length and 8 Life Buoys for more than 45 meters length should be carried in vessels.

- **3.5.7.2 Life Jackets**

Though Life Jackets are not required for vessels operating in areas of less than 0.6 meters wave height, however in other areas, life jackets are to be carried for all passengers and crews.

- **3.5.7.3 Life Rafts**

In case of vessels operating in areas of more than 1.2 meter wave height, sufficient number of life rafts for accommodating people on board is Boat Safety recommended. While keeping all lifesaving equipment, it is essential to ensure periodic maintenance and servicing following manufacturer's recommendations. In a similar manner, 'First Aid' box should be kept on board for passengers and crew members like mechanized boats.

3.5.8 Fire Safety Measures

Since mechanized boats are largely operated by means of electrical and mechanical devices, there are more chances of catching fire, thus well-structured firefighting system must be essentially maintained in mechanized boats. The following equipment is required to be kept in vessels.

3.5.8.1. Fire pump

A vessel of 6 meter and above in length should carry hand pumps or power driven pumps with hose connections capable of delivering a jet of water to any part of the vessel through hose and nozzles.

3.5.8.2. Fire Extinguishers

At least one multipurpose portable fire extinguisher to a recognized standard is to be carried in all vessels, which is to be kept outside the engine space. In addition, one multipurpose fire extinguisher should be placed at each exit from accommodation spaces to open decks. In addition, Fire Buckets and Lanyards are also to be provided in the boats. It is recommended that all firefighting equipment are to be maintained in good conditions. Like non mechanized boats, the following items should not be carried on board in all the mechanized boats –

- a) Lamps powered by liquefied gas or liquid oil
 - b) Vaporizing oil burner stoves
 - c) Solid fuel heaters
 - d) Devices fitted with wick burners
 - e) Liquefied gas devices
- Smoking shall be strictly prohibited in the boats.

3.5.9 Navigation and Communication Aids

The provisions of navigation and communication arrangements should be managed in the same manner like non mechanized boats. Anchoring and Mooring arrangements for mechanized boats should also follow the pattern of non-mechanized boats.
