

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 2621
TO BE ANSWERED ON 5th AUGUST, 2025

Livelihood Challenges for Fishermen in Kerala

2621. Shri K Sudhakaran:

Will the Minister of **Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the serious livelihood challenges faced by traditional fishermen in Kerala due to declining fish catches and the proposed deep-sea sand mining projects of the Kerala coast;
- (b) the steps taken to address the concerns raised by the fishing community and the State Government of Kerala regarding the ecological and economic impact of such mining activities; and
- (c) whether any comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted by the Government prior to approval of project and if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING

(SHRI GEORGE KURIAN)

(a) to (c): The potential of fishery resources are estimated by committee of experts constituted by Department of Fisheries, Government of India in regular intervals to ascertain the status of fish stocks and revalidation of the potential yield of the fishery resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). As per the latest report of the Expert Committee for Revalidation of Potential Fishery Resources (2018), the marine fishery resources in the Indian EEZ are estimated at 5.31 million tones. Against this potential, the average harnessing of marine fishery resources was about 4.0 million tons during the last 5 years (2019-20 to 2023-24), which is below the annual potential yield of 5.31 million tons. The over-all marine fish production of India increased from 4.43 million tones in 2022-23 to 4.49 million tones in 2023-24. However, the marine fish production from the Kerala coast has declined from 0.69 million tones in 2022-23 to 0.58 million tones in 2023-24. The Government of India along with State Government of Kerala, has taken several steps to improving the fish stocks and enhance the marine ecosystem such as installation of Artificial Reefs and promotion of sea ranching, adoption of mariculture including seaweed cultivation etc. under the "*Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana* (PMMSY)". Besides, in order to ensure sustainability of the fisheries, several measures are taken that include (i) Implementation of 61 days uniform ban on fishing in the Indian EEZ, annually, (ii) Ban on destructive fishing practices in the Indian EEZ viz. paired bottom trawling or bull trawling and use of artificial and LED lights in fishing, (iii) Declaration of marine protected areas (MPAs) and protection of endangered, threatened and protected (ETP) species (iv) Installation of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in trawl nets, fishing gear and mesh-size regulations, minimum legal size (MLS) of fishes, spatial and temporal restrictions, zonation of fishing areas by the coastal States/UTs, etc.

The Ministry of Mines, Government of India enacted the Offshore Areas Mineral and Development Act, 2002, which came into effect in 2010. The successful bidder of composite license is required to undertake exploration in the offshore area as per the Offshore Areas Existence of Mineral Resources Rules (OAEMRR), 2024. One of the requirements for exploration includes the requirement for preliminary environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies. Thereafter, grant of production lease to Composite License Holder may be considered by the Government.

Further, as per the provisions of the Offshore Areas Mineral Conservation and Development Rules, 2024, no production operations shall be undertaken except in accordance with a production plan. The production plan, *inter alia*, includes environment management plan indicating baseline information, impact assessment and mitigation measures.

Ministry of Mines has informed that, in order to protect the livelihood and safeguard the interest of fisherfolks, the concerns of fishermen and local communities will be specially addressed during the preparation of the production plan and Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which every lessee is mandated under the rules to submit before commencing exploration or production operations.

Besides, Section 16A of the Offshore Areas Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act, 2002 provides for establishment of Offshore Areas Mineral Trust as a non-profit autonomous body. Accordingly, the Offshore Areas Mineral Trust has been established vide S.O. 3246(E) dated 09.08.2024. The coastal States have been made members of the Governing Body and Executive Committee of the Trust. The funds accruing to the Trust shall, *inter alia*, be used for research, administrative activities, studies and related expenditure with respect to offshore areas; for mitigating ecological impacts resulting from operational activities; for disaster relief in offshore zones; and for supporting individuals affected by exploration and production operations.
