

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

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2585
ANSWERED ON 04/08/2026

SMALL FISHERMEN IN SUNDARBANS

2585. SHRI BAPI HALDAR:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware that small fishermen in the Sundarbans in West Bengal are facing severe livelihood challenges due to the operation of large industrial trawlers engaged in destructive bottom trawling, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether the Government has assessed the impact of such practices on marine biodiversity, fish stocks and the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities in the region, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the measures taken by the Government to regulate destructive fishing practices, strengthen monitoring and ensure sustainable fishing in the Sundarbans and adjoining coastal waters; and
- (d) whether the Government has any proposals to provide special support or protection measures for traditional and small-scale fishermen in the Lok Sabha Mathurapur Constituency in West Bengal, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF FISHERIES, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING

(SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH ALIAS LALAN SINGH)

(a) to (d): Marine fisheries within territorial waters (up to 12 nautical miles from the baseline) are regulated by the respective Coastal States as per their Marine Fishing Regulation Acts (MFRAs). In several States, including West Bengal, MFRA regulate the operation of all mechanised fishing vessels in inshore areas traditionally used by small-scale and artisanal fishers. Under the West Bengal Marine Fishing Regulation Rules, 1995, operational zones are demarcated based on vessel capacity, and mechanised vessels above 30 HP are prohibited from operating within Zone A (up to 15 km from the shoreline), which is reserved exclusively for traditional and small-scale fishers.

In the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Government of India is implementing a range of conservation and management measures to curb destructive fishing practices and promote sustainable fisheries. These include a ban on paired/bull trawling and the use of LED lights in fishing, and maritime States/UTs have been advised to enforce similar restrictions within their respective territorial waters. A uniform 61-day annual fishing ban is imposed in the EEZ during

monsoon season to support fish stock regeneration. Monitoring of fishing activities and vessel safety has been strengthened through the national roll-out of the Vessel Communication and Support System (VCSS) under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), involving installation of transponders and use of the *Nabhmitra* application. Under PMMSY, the Government of India is also supporting the fitment of Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) in shrimp trawls to protect sea turtles. Sea ranching and installation of artificial reefs in coastal areas are also being supported under PMMSY to enhance coastal fish stocks for the benefit of fishermen, particularly small-scale fishers.

The Department of Fisheries, Government of India has been implementing the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) since 2020–21. Under PMMSY, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India has approved project proposals of West Bengal amounting to ₹546.38 crore, including a Central share of ₹223.25 crore. The approval *inter alia* includes assistance for upgradation and conversion of traditional vessels, and promotion of deep-sea fishing vessels. Traditional and small-scale fishers across all States/UTs, including those in the Mathurapur Lok Sabha constituency, are eligible for support under the scheme. The Department of Fisheries, Government of India has also approved the modernisation and upgradation of the existing fishing harbours at Petuaghat, Shankarpur, Frasergunj and Kakdwip in Medinipur, Purba Medinipur and South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, with an investment of ₹65.65 crore, to provide safe and hygienic landing facilities for fishermen, including traditional fishers. Additionally, alternative livelihood opportunities such as mariculture, seaweed cultivation, and open-sea cage culture are being promoted to reduce pressure on nearshore fisheries.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has informed that its research institutes and centres have been developing and demonstrating need-based technologies for fish farmers and fishermen of West Bengal, including those in the Sundarbans, covering freshwater aquaculture, brackishwater aquaculture, pen and cage culture in open-water bodies, and marine fisheries assessment and management. These institutes are also implementing Central Government welfare schemes, including the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP), to provide livelihood support to marginal fishermen and fish farmers in the State, including in the Sundarbans.
