

**(To be issued in local Language also by respective State/UT Government)**

**Model Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to movement of Fisherman and Fishing Boats in COVID-19 Scenario**

**Dated –18-04-2020**

Reference is invited to Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Order No.40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 read with MHA's Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 and Order dated 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2020, regarding addition of sub-clause (p) in exception to clause 4 to *inter alia* allow marine fishing activities during the lockdown period.

In light of the situation arising out of COVID-19 outbreak and implementation of lockdown it is very important that a well-planned and strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are adopted by all coastal districts while allowing marine fishing operations in light of the above instructions of the MHA.

Accordingly, the following Model SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) may be adopted by the coastal States/UTs with suitable modifications as per local conditions subject to the instructions contained in MHA's Order No. 40-3/2020-DM-I(A) dated 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 to ensure social distancing and undertaking requisite precautions in view of COVID-19.

Every year, uniform ban on fishing by all fishing vessels (excluding non-motorized boats) is imposed - on the East Coast from 15<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> June; and on the West coast from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 31<sup>st</sup> July for conservation and effective management of fishery resources and also for a sea safety reasons. This annual uniform seasonal ban on fishing on East and West coast shall be implemented as per standing instructions of the Department of Fisheries, Government of India and the State/UT Governments and the below mentioned SOPs are **no way in relaxation of the said uniform fishing ban period.**

These SOPs should be implemented through District Administration including District Fisheries Administration and need to be strictly followed by all fishermen/ owners and operators of fishing vessels, be it motorized, mechanized or non-motorized vessels/boats. The District Administration including Fisheries Department will coordinate with the Coast Guard and Coastal Security personnel for any help, including helping any distress call by fisherman or crew member while fishing in the sea.

Relaxations allowed for marine fishing activities can be withdrawn at any time by the Government in case of non-compliance of SOPs or for such other reasons as may be decided by the Government of India.

The SOPs may consist of 4 parts–

- 1. Before Departure of Fishing Vessels/Boats**
- 2. During Fishing at Sea**
- 3. Arrival of Vessels/Boats at Jetty/Shore/Fish Landing Centre**
- 4. Procedure regarding Post Harvest and Transportation of Fish Catch**

#### **A. Before Departure of Fishing Vessels/Boats**

1. The fishing boats/vessels authorized and permitted by the coastal States/Union Territories (UTs) will be allowed to do fishing in the Territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) subject to the compliance of uniform seasonal fishing ban period.
2. The operation of such fishing boats/vessels will be subject to compliance of the Guidelines issued by the MHA and the SOPs issued by concerned State/UT Government.
3. For overall coordination, oversight and smooth implementation of marine fishing operations during the COVID-19, the coastal States/UTs may constitute a “Committee” headed by District Collector with relevant district officers including District Fisheries Heads as members. Representatives of local fishermen associations and fishing vessels’ owners/operators associations may be included in the Committee.
4. The State/UT Government will establish a system for surveillance in the Fishing Harbors/fish landing sites. A ‘Surveillance Booth’ should be set up and nodal officer(s) be appointed at each Fishing Harbour (FH)/Fish Landing sites. The fishing vessels/boats with necessary permission will be allowed to sail from a designated location and return after completion of voyage to the same location.
5. The contact number(s) of such Booth/ nodal officer(s) to remain functional at all times (24x 7) and displayed properly in the FH/FLCs etc. and made available to each operator(s) of fishing boats/vessels, which are permitted to fish.
6. The State/UT Government and District Administration in consultation with the local Fishermen Associations/ Bodies will plan and execute the fishing voyages in such a manner, so as to maintain proper monitoring, control and surveillance including connectivity with the fishing boats. Further, the voyages have to be planned and executed in such a manner that if any crew member of a fishing boat/vessel reports symptoms like cough, headache, body ache, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, runny nose and sore throat etc., he should immediately be able to communicate with the nodal officer(s) of the district of departure and such fishing boat/vessel shall return to the designated fishing harbour/fish landing site within shortest possible time.
7. The owner/operator of the boats/vessels shall ensure arrangement of all protective gears

to avoid spread of Covid-19 virus (Sanitizer, Soap etc.) for the crew members. The crew members while venturing to sea for fishing activities to be advised to wear hand gloves, mask and ensure all precautions. The Owner/operator of the boat/vessel shall also ensure sanitization of the boat/vessel before and after each voyage.

8. Social distancing and proper hygiene practices shall be maintained while loading of ice, water, ration, diesel and unloading of fish catch at the fishing harbours/fish landing sites. These operations shall be carried out with minimum operational staff.
9. Disinfectant spraying and cleanliness has to be carried out at all jetties/landing centres and has to be continued as a regular practice till situation becomes normal.
10. Entry into Jetty/Fish landing sites should be restricted only for fishermen and crew members of the permitted vessels/boats (i.e. only for fishing related activities).
11. To avoid inconvenience to the fishermen, the local Fisheries Department shall facilitate the issue of permit for the fishermen venturing for fishing on submission of their details (e.g., Name of Fishers, Registration No. of vessels, Fishers ID No./Aadhaar No., Date & duration of Voyage etc.) at least 24 hrs in advance.
12. The State Government /UT Administration will set up a 'Facilitation Centre' in the Fisheries Department (for overall coordination work in the State/UT) and the details of this Centre to be conveyed to Disaster or Control Room Centre or Helpline Numbers of each district.
13. The team deployed at 'Surveillance Booth' will monitor the movement of fishing boats/vessels including upkeep and maintenance of boat/vessel movement books /records.
14. Medical Check Up/Screening Camps to be setup in advance at FH/FLCs in co-ordination with Health Department of each District. Health Department should provide a separate team of doctors/medical practitioners/attendants so that somebody is always available for medical screening of fisherman and crew members as per their movement timings. Medical Screening Team should also make fisherman & crew members aware about the symptoms related to COVID-19 and preventions (social distancing etc.) along with procedure to be followed related to it.
15. Boat operators and owners shall declare the list the crew members to the personnel posted at the Surveillance Booth /Fishing Department and are also directed to fill all details in the movement register including the date of sailing for fishing. Department can devise their own format of recording details.
16. Disinfection of Fishing Boat & equipment for each vessel/boat has to be carried out before their departure.

17. District Administration should also earmark some vehicles (in consultation with Fishermen Association) exclusively for supply of diesel, ice etc. and collection and transportation of Fish catch after arrival on fishing harbor / fish landing centre.
18. The information of crew is to be given to Medical Screening Team by Fisheries Dept.
19. The crew members should be fishermen, who are currently residing/present within that district only. Movement of crew should be preferably limited within the district only, since there can be chances of spread if crew is moving from any COVID-19 Hotspot or COVID – 19 Positive Case District or Locality.
20. The boat operators and crew members allowed to venture out into sea for fishing activities should carry a valid document for identification purposes and the same should be ensured by local administration.
21. All crew members must provide contact details of their family members/relatives and AAROGYA SETU Mobile App to be downloaded on their phone (if they have compatible mobile device).
22. All the fishing boat crew members will be subjected to thermal scanning at the monitoring booth and they will be allowed to embark into the boat only after the scanning.
23. Sufficient provisions to be made for frequent hand washing and supply of soap / hand wash, Face Masks and sanitizers on board for all the crew members. Department will ensure that all the boat owners have complied these instructions. .
24. Subject to clearance from the health department, permission will be granted to depart the fishing. The details should be entered in the boat movement book and also in the records maintained at surveillance booth.

### **B. During Fishing at Sea**

25. The boat and crew members will be allowed to carry out fishing have to return to the designated fishing harbor/fish landing site within the stipulated date and time as permitted by the designated district authority and informed to Surveillance Booth /Fisheries Department.
26. The fishing crew members to be advised that no physical contacts or exchanges of items to be made by them with crew members of other boats/vessels while fishing out at sea.

27. To track the location, monitoring and surveillance of fishing vessels and for maintaining connectivity with fishing boats/vessels, the concerned State/ UT Government and District Administration should put in place suitable system and extend help, if any in distress. Close coordination with Coastguard and Coastal Security Personnel shall be maintained in this regard by the concerned State/UT and District Administration.
28. When any crew member is reported sick and develop any symptoms like coughing, headache, fever, body ache, shortness of breath, nasal congestion, runny nose, and sore throat etc. while fishing in sea, the fishing activity should be abandoned and the fishing boat/vessel should return back to the designated jetty/landing site immediately. They should also not consume or touch their catch while returning from sea. Also the catch must not be discharged in the sea.
29. The crew members to maintain social distance while on board, take all sanitary precautions and avoid contact with the fellow crew members having symptoms. In no case they should come in contact with that symptomatic person.

### **C. Arrival of Vessels/Boats at Fishing Harbour/Fish Landing sites**

30. Fishing boats/vessels shall be allowed to return to the designated Fishing Harbour/Fish Landing site in a staggered manner.
31. The operations and movements of persons for unloading of fish catch and transportation shall be planned properly and carried out with bare minimum operational staff.
32. The boat and crew members should not land in any of the fishing harbor/landing site other than the designated fishing harbor/fish landing site from where they were permitted to depart for fishing. The owner of the fishing vessel shall also ensure that the fishing vessel shall not enter any other ports/landing site.
33. The boat should be anchored at an anchorage point near the jetty and kept in isolation. The crew members should contact the 'surveillance booth'/health authorities. After thorough checking and thermal scanner by the health authorities, the crew members will be allowed to disembark and the advice of health authorities and district authorities to be followed.
34. The Owner of the boat/vessel shall ensure sanitization of the boat after each voyage. Fishing Boat & equipment should be sanitized as per the advice of the Health Authorities and shall be carried out immediately on arrival. Adequate care should be taken to avoid any contamination of the fish catch.
35. On arrival, all the crew members will be scanned using hand held thermal scanner and thereafter, they will be allowed to move out the landing area /jetty.
36. In case a crew member shows symptoms of COVID-19, all of the crew members have to

undergo mandatory quarantine as per procedure. The fish catch received from the boat /vessel will be destroyed as per Bio-medical waste disposal norms prescribed by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GoI.

#### **D. Procedure regarding Post Harvest and Transportation of Fish Catch**

37. Social distancing should be maintained in the landing points, fish markets and cold storages. Dealers or workers of fish collection sites/markets should also adhere to preventive guidelines and social distancing as prescribed by MoHFW.
38. All fish collection centre/markets to be sanitized on daily basis as per the advice of the Health Authorities.
39. Fish landings shall be transported to the nearby markets, stalls, shops etc. through the vehicles for which necessary Identification Cards shall be issued by district authorities.
40. The auctioning of fish may be carried out systematically at the designated sites / areas as decided by the district authorities in consultation with the Fisheries Department /stakeholders and drawing of circles/line shall be made at appropriate distances, so as to maintain social distance among the bidders and sellers.
41. The retail vending of fish shall not be permitted at the fish landing centers/points to avoid overcrowding.
42. Suitable arrangements may be made by the district administration in consultation with Fisheries Department, Fishermen Cooperative Society/Associations/bulk purchasers to sell the fish consumed by the locals in such a manner so that to maintain social distancing and hygienic conditions.
43. Appropriate steps may be taken for door to door delivery of fish to people by maintaining social distancing. The fish seller shall use the hand gloves and masks while selling the fish.

**The above list is not exhaustive and the District Administration in consultation with Fisheries Department and stakeholders may include such other appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the advisories issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.**