



Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021

Why in News

Recently, the Parliament has passed the **Marine Aids to Navigation Bill 2021**. The bill will **repeal the Lighthouse Act, 1927**, an over nine-decade-old law governing the traditional navigation aid, i.e. lighthouses.

Key Points

▪ Background:

- Uptil now, the **administration and management of Lighthouse and Lightships** in India is governed by **Lighthouse Act 1927** for safe navigation.
- Lighthouses serve **two main purposes** viz. as a **navigational aid** and to **warn boats of dangerous areas**.
 - It is like a **traffic sign on the sea**.
- However, as the **technology evolved**, systems were put in place where with the help of Radar and other sensors, vessels were advised from shore about the position.
 - Thus, **Vessel Traffic Services (VTS)** came into existence and found wide acceptability.
- These modern, technologically improved aids to marine navigation systems have changed their profile from a **'passive' service to that of 'passive as well as interactive' service**.
- The need for enactment of a new Act is necessitated to **provide an appropriate statutory framework which reflects the modern role of marine aids to navigation** and to be in **compliance with India's obligations under International Conventions**.

▪ Salient Features of the Bill:

- **Main Objectives:**
 - Incorporating the **global best practices and technological developments**,
 - Complying with **India's International obligations** in the field of Marine Aids to Navigation,
 - Making the **legislative framework user-friendly**,
 - Promoting **ease of doing business**.
- **Scope of the Law:** The Bill applies to the whole of India including various maritime zones including **territorial waters, continental shelf, and [exclusive economic zone](#)**.
- **Defined Mechanism:** It **defines aid to navigation** as a device, system or service, external to vessels, designed and operated to enhance safe and efficient navigation of individual vessels and vessel traffic.
 - **Vessel traffic service** means a service implemented under the Act to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to protect the environment.
- **Institutional Mechanism:** The Bill provides that the Central government shall appoint a **Director General**, who will inter alia advise the central government on matters related to aids to navigation.

- It also provides for appointments of **Deputy Director Generals and Directors for districts.**
- **Heritage Lighthouse:** The Bill empowers the Central Government to designate any aid to navigation under its control as a "**heritage lighthouse**".
 - In addition to their function as aids to navigation, such lighthouses will be developed for **educational, cultural, and tourism purposes.**
- **Offences and Penalties:** It comprises a **new schedule of offences**, along with commensurate penalties for obstructing and damaging the aids to navigation, and non-compliance with directives issued by the Central Government and other bodies.
- **Intended Benefits:**
 - **Improved Legal Framework** for Matters related to Aids to Navigation & Vessel Traffic Services and covers the future developments in the field of Marine Navigation.
 - **Management of 'Vessel Traffic Services' for enhancing the safety and efficiency** of shipping and to protect the environment.
 - **Skill development** through Training and Certification for the operators of 'Aids to Navigation' and 'Vessel Traffic Services' at par with International standards.
 - **Auditing and Accreditation of Institutes** to cater to the need of Training and Certification at par with global standards.
 - **Marking of "Wreck" in general waters** to identify sunken / stranded vessels for safe and efficient navigation.
 - **Development of Lighthouses for the purpose of education, culture and tourism**, which would tap the tourism potential of coastal regions and contribute to their economy.

Source: PIB

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