



Palk Bay Scheme and Marine Fisheries Bill

Why in News

The Union Government is considering **increasing the unit cost of deep-sea fishing vessels from Rs 80 L to Rs 1.3 Cr under the Palk Bay scheme** to make it more attractive to fisherfolk.

- Earlier, the **Marine Fisheries Bill 2021** was tabled in the Parliament during the [Monsoon session](#).

Key Points

▪ About Palk Bay Scheme:

- The Scheme, **“Diversification Of Trawl Fishing Boats From Palk Straits Into Deep Sea Fishing Boats”**, was **launched in 2017** as a [Centrally Sponsored Scheme](#).
- It was launched as part of the umbrella [Blue Revolution Scheme](#).
 - The Blue Revolution is part of the Government's efforts to promote fishing as an allied activity for farmers in order to double their incomes.
- It is a **Tamil Nadu-specific scheme** aimed at **providing 2,000 vessels in three years to fishermen of the State** and motivating them **to abandon bottom trawling**.
 - **Bottom trawling**, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources.
- **Another objective** of the scheme is to **“reduce fishing pressure”** around the proximity of the [International Maritime Boundary Line \(IMBL\)](#) so that Tamil Nadu fishermen do not cross the IMBL and fish in Sri Lankan waters.
- The **Funding pattern** of the scheme is Centre 50%, State 20%, Institutional funding 10% and Beneficiary 20%.
- The Scheme is **limited to vessels costing upto Rs. 80 Lakh**.
- The scheme is **not part of** [Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana](#).

▪ Marine Fisheries Bill:

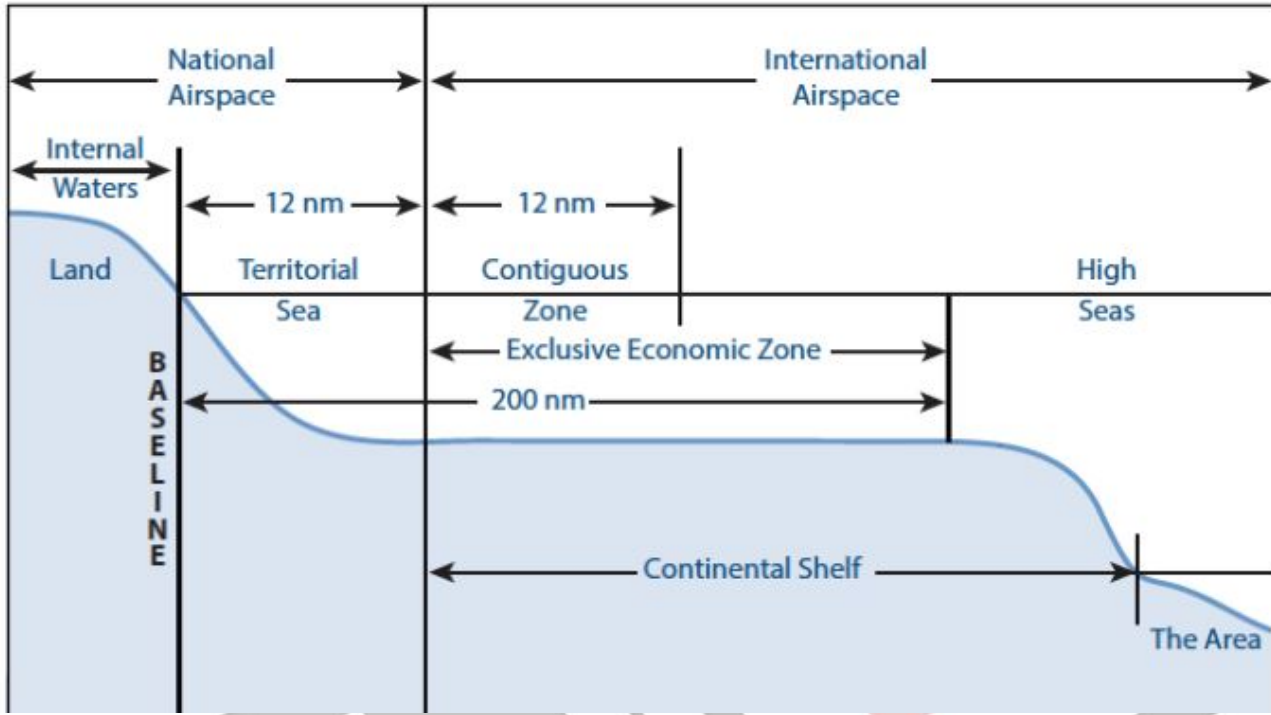
- The Bill proposes to **only grant licenses to vessels registered under the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958, to fish in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.
- It also proposes **punishments for fishermen breaching the EEZ** without a licence, not complying with [Indian Coast Guard \(ICG\)](#) orders, and obstructing ICG officials.
- The Bill **prohibits fishing by foreign fishing vessels**, thus nationalising our EEZ.
- It proposes **social security for fish workers** and **calls for protection of life at sea** during severe weather events.

Maritime Zones

- Under [UNCLOS](#) (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - 1982), which **India ratified in 1995**, the **sea and resources in the water and the seabed are classified into three zones** - the **Internal Waters (IW)**, the **Territorial Sea (TS)** and the **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.

- The **IW** is on the landward side of the baseline - it includes gulfs and small bays.
- The **TS** extends outwards to 12 nautical miles from the baseline - coastal nations enjoy sovereignty over airspace, sea, seabed and subsoil and all living and non-living resources therein.
- The **EEZ** extends outwards to 200 nautical miles from the baseline. Coastal nations have sovereign rights for exploration, exploiting, conserving and managing all the natural resources therein.
- Since **fisheries is a state subject, fishing in the IW and TS come within the purview of the states concerned.**
- **Other activities in the TS** and activities, including **fishing beyond the TS up to the limit of the EEZ**, are in the [Union list](#).

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