

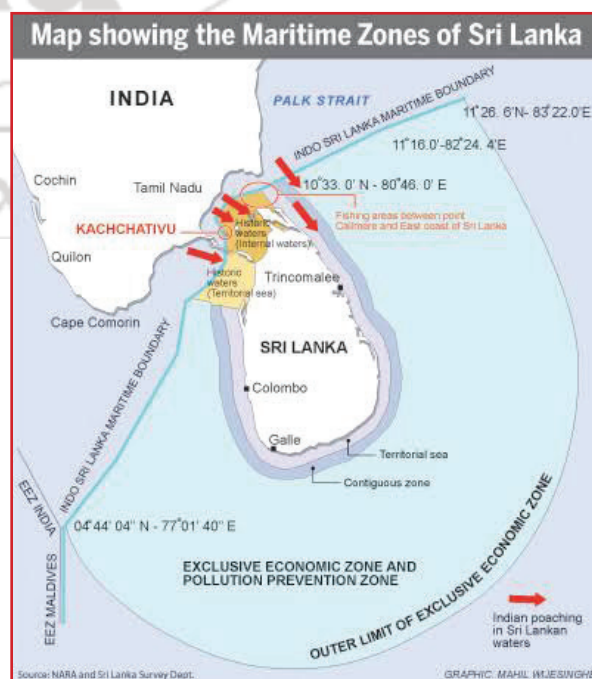
## More efforts should be made to wean away fishermen from trawlers.

The arrest of 68 Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan authorities between December 18 and 20 and the impounding of 10 boats for “poaching” in territorial waters have again raised concerns about the fate of the men. It is a matter of comfort and relief that the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka is working to secure their early release. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M.K. Stalin, in his communication to the External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, on Monday, has underscored the need to get back 75 fishing boats too from Sri Lanka. Fishermen from Tamil Nadu getting arrested and released later has become a routine affair, but there have been cases of deaths.

In January 2021, four fishermen from Ramanathapuram district lost their lives after their vessel collided with a Sri Lankan naval craft. There was a similar case in October in which a fisherman died. This is why the Palk Bay fishing dispute needs a resolution soon.

The fact that many rounds of discussions — at the levels of the fishermen and the governments of the two countries — have not led to any tangible improvement in the situation should not deter the pursuit of sustained engagement to sort out a problem that involves humanitarian and livelihood issues.

The bone of contention between the two countries has been the use of bottom trawlers by the Tamil Nadu fishermen, a practice opposed in Sri Lanka’s Northern Province on the ground that trawling damages the marine ecosystem. This practice has been banned in Sri Lanka and there have been agitations for stringent enforcement of the law. More than anything else, the fishermen of Tamil Nadu should take into account the fact that their



counterparts on the other side of the Palk Strait are still struggling to pick up the threads of their lives after a brutal civil war.

Given that an ambitious ₹1,600 crore scheme of replacing in three years 2,000 bottom trawlers with deep-sea fishing boats equipped with long lines and gill nets continues to be a disappointment, both the Central and Tamil Nadu governments need to take up fresh initiatives to get the fishermen on board.

The main reason for failure is the component of cost to be borne by the fishermen, accounting for 30% of the unit cost of ₹80 lakh; the two governments take care of the remaining 70%. Apart from increasing

the unit cost at least to ₹1.2 crore, which will be at the same level as that of a similar scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), the Governments must increase their share of subsidy.

They should also motivate the fishermen to adopt sea cage farming and sea/ocean ranching, which were all covered under the PMMSY. Such an approach is essential as the fishermen find it hard to restrict themselves to India's territorial waters, given the limited marine wealth and area on the Indian side. But, the priority now for New Delhi should be in securing the swift release of the 68 fishermen.



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## GS World Team Input

### **\*IN THE NEWS\***

#### **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana**

- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana is a flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries sector in the country as a part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan. It aims to:-
- Adopt 'Cluster or Area-based Approaches' and create fisheries clusters through backward and forward linkages.
- Focus especially on employment generation activities such as seaweed and ornamental fish cultivation.
- Address critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and management, modernisation and strengthening of the value chain, traceability, establishing a robust fisheries management framework and fishers' welfare.
- Consolidate the achievements of the blue revolution and bring new interventions such as fishing vessel insurance, support for new/up-gradation of fishing vessels/boats, integrated aqua parks, e-trading/marketing, etc.

#### **Targets**

- Enhance fish production by an additional 70 lakh tonne and increase fisheries export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore by 2024-25.
- Double the incomes of fishers and fish farmers.
- Reduce post-harvest losses from 20-25% to about 10%.
- Generate an additional 55 lakhs direct and indirect gainful employment opportunities in the fisheries sector and allied activities.

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## Expected Question (Prelims Exams)

- Q. What is correct about the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana?
- (a) It is started for a period of 5 years.
  - (b) An estimated investment of Rs 20,050 crore will be made on this scheme.
  - (c) To increase fish production by an additional 7 million tonnes by the year 2024-25.
  - (d) All of the above

## Expected Question (Mains Exams)

- Q. The recent arrest of Indian fishermen by Sri Lanka shows the distrust and dialogue gap existing in bilateral ties regarding this issue. What steps need to be taken by the governments of both the countries on fishermen issues? Discuss.

(250 Words)

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**Note: - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC main examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.**