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Draft Aids to Navigation Bill 2020

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Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Shipping** has issued the **draft** of the **Aids to Navigation Bill, 2020** for suggestions from the stakeholders and general public.

- It aims to regulate **state-of-the-art technologies of marine navigation** which was earlier used to tangle in statutory provisions of **Lighthouse Act, 1927**.
- **A navigational aid** is any kind of marker which aids the traveler in navigation, usually nautical or aviation travel. Common types of such aids include **lighthouses, buoys, fog signals, and day beacons**.

Key Points

- **Replacement of Lighthouse Act:** It is proposed to replace the **nine decades old colonial Lighthouse Act, 1927**, to incorporate the **global best practices, technological developments** and India's **International obligations** in the field of aids to **marine navigation**.
 - It also provides for **identification and development of heritage lighthouses**.
 - **The Lighthouse Act** is an act **relating to the provision, maintenance and control of lighthouses**. It was enacted by the Britishers in 1927.
- **Empowerment of DGLL:** It provides for empowering **Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL)** with **additional power and functions** such as vessel traffic service, wreck flagging, training and certification, implementation of other obligations under International Conventions, where India is a signatory.
- **Offences:** 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.

- **Aids to Navigation Cess:** Every ship arriving at or departing from any port in India will have to **pay cess at rates** notified by the Central government.
 - Currently, the Central government, as per the provisions of the Lighthouse Act, levies **light dues** on all the foreign going ships arriving at or departing from any port in India.
 - **Light dues** are the charges levied on **ships** for the maintenance of lighthouses and other aids to navigation.
- **Significance**
 - **Proactive Approach:** The draft bill is part of the **proactive approach** adopted by the Ministry of Shipping by repealing archaic colonial laws and replacing it with modern and contemporary needs of the maritime industry.
 - **Misinterpretation of the Lighthouse Act:** It is often seen that the Act is **misinterpreted by the custom department under the Customs Act of 1962** and has led to incorrect collection of a huge sum of light dues thereby putting financial & economic burden upon citizens.
 - **Modern Technologies:** The role of authorities regulating and operating maritime navigation has changed drastically along with the **advent improved aids to maritime navigation.**

The new law **encompasses a major shift from lighthouses to modern aids** of navigation.
 - **Strengthening of the Provisions:** The suggestions from the public and stakeholders will strengthen the provisions of the legislation. This is in line with the vision for augmenting **people's participation and transparency** in the **governance**.

Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships

- It is a subordinate office under the **Ministry of Shipping** to provide general aids to marine navigation along the Indian coast.
- **Mission:** To help the mariners and local fisherman to navigate safely in the Indian waters.
- **Headquarters:** Noida, Uttar Pradesh

Source: PIB