

## MAJOR PORTS AUTHORITIES BILL 2020 PASSED IN RAJYA SABHA

**TAGS:** GS-3: Economy, Infrastructure: Port Sector

### **CONTEXT:**

- Parliament Wednesday saw the first **instance of division voting** in times of the pandemic, **with Major Ports Authorities Bill 2020 passed** in Rajya Sabha as members **voted through slips** in view of social distancing norms in place.

### **NEWS IN DETAILS:**

- The Bill was passed with 88 votes for and 44 against.
- Division voting:** The idea of holding division voting at a time when electronic voting is not an option as members are not sitting at designated places initially caused some confusion.
- Union Minister Piyush Goyal then requested that all members of Rajya Sabha be allowed **to come to the House chamber for the voting**, but then Secretary General Desh Deepak Verma announced that voting will take **place through slips**.

### **FEATURES OF THE PORT BILL:**

- Regulation of major ports:** The Bill provides for regulation of major ports.
- It will **replace the Major Port Trusts Act of 1963**.
- Major Port Authority:** A board of Major Port Authority for each major port will replace the current port trusts.
- Autonomy to Ports:** In the new Bill, the government has “brought in a provision that will allow ports to take their own decisions”.
- Tariffs:** To change tariffs, the ports have to now approach the ministry.
- “In the port sector in the last six years, we have doubled the profit. Profit has increased, liabilities have come down. For modernisation, 300 projects are ongoing.”
- Competitive Edge:** Countering the Opposition charge that the Bill is aimed at privatising ports, Mandaviya said, “This **Bill is not to privatise any port**, but it is to ensure that our **ports can properly compete with private ports**.”

### **CRITICISM:**

- Opposition parties Congress, the Left parties, DMK, Trinamool Congress, RJD and the SP opposed the legislation and BJD and YSRCP supported it.
- Affect states' rights:** Many Opposition members said the legislation would adversely affect states' rights.
- Crony Capitalism:** “First the airports were given to a friend... now sea ports... hope this Bill has not been brought to hand over ports to a friend.”
- Singapore model of corporatisation:** “This Bill is nothing but a retraction of the Singapore model... When there was hue and cry that there cannot be privatisation of ports, it adopted a **policy of so-called corporatisation**. Thereafter, it ultimately privatised its ports. So, corporatisation is the first step. The next in the offing is privatisation.”

**Source:** Indian Express

