

Credit - Drishti Ias

## India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute and Way Forward



Source: TH

### Why in News?

The **India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute** highlights the **need** for a “**humane approach** ” that balances fishing livelihoods with ecological conservation in the **Palk Strait** and around **Katchatheevu island**.



### What is the India-Sri Lanka Fishing Dispute?

- **Location** : The dispute centers around the **Palk Strait** , the narrow body of water separating Tamil Nadu (India) and the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Palk Strait connects the Palk Bay to the Bay of Bengal.
- **Katchatheevu is a tiny, uninhabited islet in the Palk Strait**. The dispute concerns this 285-acre island, which was ceded to Sri Lanka under the **1974 Maritime Boundary Agreement**.

- While sovereignty is legally settled in **Sri Lanka's favour**, Indian fishermen are allowed to visit the islet for drying nets and for religious purposes.
- **Fishing rights** remain a separate matter governed by historic practice, international law ( **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982** ), and bilateral agreements.
- **Communities involved** : Traditional Tamil Nadu fishers and Sri Lanka's Northern Province fishers have shared these waters for centuries.
- **Key conflict** : Indian mechanised trawlers enter Sri Lankan waters, engaging in **bottom trawling** , which **is banned in Sri Lanka since 2017**. This damages coral reefs, shrimp habitats, and depletes fish stocks.
  - Small-scale artisanal fishers struggle to survive as mechanised trawlers pursue commercial profit, often damaging shared marine resources.
  - The conflict is thus both cross-border (India-Sri Lanka) and intra-community (artisanal vs trawler operators in Tamil Nadu).
- **High Seas Issues:** Due to depleted fish stocks, Indian fishermen are increasingly venturing into the **High Seas** , leading to arrests in **Maldivian waters** and by the **British Navy near Diego Garcia** for allegedly crossing maritime boundaries.

## What Measures Can Address the India-Sri Lanka Fishing Issue and Ensure Sustainable Fisheries?

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- **Distinguish livelihoods: Prioritise artisanal fishers** who depend on traditional, sustainable methods. **Phase out mechanised bottom trawling**, which harms ecosystems and deprives both Indian and Sri Lankan small-scale fishers.
- **Strengthen cooperation frameworks:** Establish an India-Sri Lanka Fisheries Management Council with fisher groups, scientists, and officials.
  - Use **UNCLOS Article 123** to guide cooperation in the semi-enclosed Palk Strait and Gulf of Mannar.
  - Consider joint quotas (similar to the **Baltic Sea Fisheries Convention's** quota-sharing model), seasonal fishing rights, or regulated fishing days specifically for artisanal fishers.
- **Invest in alternatives:** Promote deep-sea fishing in India's 200-nautical-mile **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** to reduce pressure on near-shore resources.
  - Provide training, modern vessels, and financial support for fishers to transition away from destructive practices.
- **Depoliticise Katchatheevu:** Accept that sovereignty over Katchatheevu is legally settled under the 1974 Treaty. **Debunk myths that it was "gifted" as historical records show Sri Lanka had stronger claims.**
  - Emphasise that **fishing rights are separate from sovereignty and can still be negotiated cooperatively** . Use Katchatheevu for **joint marine research stations** and as a hub for ecological cooperation.
- **Foster community empathy:** Highlight the wartime hardships of Sri Lankan Tamil fishers to build goodwill in Tamil Nadu. Encourage **people-to-people ties, recalling Tamil Nadu's humanitarian support during Sri Lanka's civil war.**

## Conclusion

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The Katchatheevu and Palk Strait issues should be **seen as opportunities for cooperation**, not

conflict. A **fair fisheries regime** that protects artisanal livelihoods and ecology is key. Smaller disputes must not overshadow the larger **vision of peace and mutual respect in South Asia**.

***Drishti Mains Question:***

**Q.** The India-Sri Lanka fishing dispute reflects the clash between livelihood needs and ecological sustainability. Discuss

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

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### ***Mains***

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**Q.** 'India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in the light of the preceding statement. **(2022)**

**Q.** In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. **(2013)**

# Isobutanol Blending with Diesel



## Source: TH

India is now exploring **isobutanol blending with diesel** after unsuccessful **ethanol -diesel trials** , highlighting the government's push for biofuels to support farmers, reduce oil imports, and ensure sustainable energy use.

- **Isobutanol:** It is a four-carbon alcohol ( $C_4H_{10}O$ ), flammable, colorless, and traditionally used as a solvent in paints, coatings, and chemical industries. It is produced both from petrochemical processes and fermentation of biomass.
- **Properties (vs. Ethanol):** Higher energy density than ethanol (closer to diesel).
  - It has lower hygroscopicity (absorbs less water than ethanol), reducing risks of corrosion in engines and pipelines.
- **Isobutanol Blending Trials:** [Automotive Research Association of India \(ARAI\)](#) is testing 10% isobutanol-diesel blends.
  - Isobutanol is also being explored as an **independent fuel** and in **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)-isobutanol flex-fuel options** for tractors and agri-machinery.
- **Benefits for India:** Isobutanol enhances energy security while promoting a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels. Supports India's [National Biofuel Policy \(2018\)](#) goals of energy transition and farmer income support.

**Read more: India Achieves 20% Ethanol Blending in Petrol**