

DAILY PT POINTERS

16th December, 2023



HEADLINES OF THE DAY

The Hindu: GS2-Polity and Governance (Page 2)

MLALAD funds raised to ₹7 crore, Minister tells Delhi Assembly

Ruckus breaks out over BJP's claims of 203 people dying of cold in one month; Bharadwaj charges Oppn. MLAs with misleading the House

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Member of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALAD) funds have been increased from ₹4 crore to ₹7 crore, Urban Development Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said in the Assembly on Friday.

MLALAD funds are allotted to legislators to carry out development projects in their constituencies. The Delhi Assembly has a strength of 70 MLAs.

Responding to a question on the first day of the two-day winter session, Mr. Bharadwaj said MLALAD funds were increased from ₹4 crore to ₹10 crore



BJP MLAs protesting outside the Assembly House on the first day of the two-day winter session. SHIVKUMAR PUSHPAKAR

ta shared by the government. The unspent funds for 2022-23 amounted to ₹78 crore. In the current financial year, ₹197 crore is yet to be spent, data also showed.

"The Speaker had been notified about the discussion on this matter [related to the deaths of homeless people]. He acknowledged the notice but was not willing to conduct an imme-

- Member of Legislative Assembly Local Area Development Scheme (MLALAD) funds are allotted to legislators to carry out development projects in their constituencies.
- The Delhi Assembly has a strength of 70 MLAs.
-

Do you know ?

The Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is a Central Sector Scheme fully funded by Government of India. The objective of the scheme is to enable MPs to recommend works of developmental nature with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets in the areas of drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc. primarily in their Constituencies.

- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per Member of Parliament (MP) constituency is Rs.5 crore, released in two instalments of Rs.2.5 crore each, subject to the fulfilment of conditions as per the MPLADS Guidelines.

The Hindu: GS2-IR (Page 6)

A time-honoured connect that will help bridge the Gulf

The Sultan of Oman, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, is visiting India from December 16 on a state visit. This is his first visit to India after taking over in January 2020 following the passing of Sultan Qaboos. The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, had visited Oman in February 2018 in his first visit to Oman as Prime Minister. In what proved to be a landmark visit, key agreements on trade, defence and security were agreed upon, making it a milestone in diplomatic relations between India and Oman.

Oman is the closest neighbour to India in the Arabian Gulf region. With key Omani ports abutting the coastline along the Arabian Sea as well as the Gulf of Oman leading into the Persian Gulf and towards the Gulf of Aden, Oman's location is of utmost strategic importance to India. Along with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman completes the trio of key strategic partners of India in the Gulf region.

The ruling family of Oman has always had a strong connection with India. Sultan Qaboos was always favourably disposed towards India and invited Indian companies and professionals to undertake projects apart from sourcing supplies from India. At the people to people level too, India and Oman enjoy close ties. There is a large Indian community of almost seven lakh people which has contributed to the constantly evolving vibrant relations.

During the Cold War era, and even thereafter, when the Arab world was largely ambivalent towards India and was often soft and supportive of Pakistan, it was Oman which kept its doors open to India. In a conflict prone region, Oman has always been an island of peace. It has pursued a foreign policy which is based on the twin strands of moderation and mediation, including a policy of deliberate neutrality in dealing with regional issues and conflicts. It has carefully balanced its close relations with the western powers and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with a pragmatic approach to neighbouring Iran, maintaining that the Straits of Hormuz will not be closed. Even during the Persian Gulf crisis in 2019, when the United States and Iran were on the brink of a military conflict, it was Oman which played a key role in diffusing tensions.

Oman's key role in the Iran nuclear deal in July



Rajeev Agarwal
a retired colonel, is the Assistant Director of the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi. He has served as Director in the Ministry of External Affairs and as Director, Military Intelligence

Oman has a pivotal role to play in India seeking deeper engagement and collaboration in West Asia

2015 is well documented and acknowledged too. During the GCC-Qatar diplomatic stand-off, Oman refused to join Saudi Arabia and other countries in breaking diplomatic ties with Qatar in June 2017. Much before the Abraham Accords were signed between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain in September 2020, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had made a surprise visit to Oman in October 2018, once again confirming the importance of Oman in the region.

India-Oman strategic partnership

Oman is a crucial pillar of India's West Asia policy, with their multi-faceted engagement increasingly taking on a more strategic shape in recent decades. The India-Oman strategic partnership was signed during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Oman in November 2008 and is based on twin pillars of mutual trust and shared interests. Oman was one of the few countries to have been invited by India to its G-20 presidency as a guest nation earlier this year.

Defence and security engagement form a key pillar of this strategic partnership and are governed by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2005. Oman is the first Gulf country with which all the three wings of India's defence forces hold joint exercises. Since 2012-13, an Indian naval ship has remained on duty in the Gulf of Oman for anti-piracy operations. Oman has allowed overflights/transit by Indian military aircraft too. In recent years, both countries have cooperated in ensuring maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.

During the Persian Gulf crisis in June 2019, the Indian Navy launched 'Operation Sankalp' to ensure the safe passage of Indian flagged ships which most often operated off the coast of Oman. The MoU on Duqm Port during Mr. Modi's visit is a historic landmark in our security cooperation, providing basing facilities, Operational Turn Round and other logistics facilities to Indian naval ships operating in the region.

Trade and commerce forms yet another important pillar of engagement. Bilateral trade during FY2022-23 reached \$12.388 billion. There are over 6,000 India-Oman joint ventures in Oman, with an estimated investment of over \$7.5 billion.

India was the second largest market for

Oman's crude oil exports for the year 2022 after China. In October 2022, India and Oman launched the Rupay debit card in Oman, a key footprint of India's initiative of promoting digital public infrastructure (DPI) in the world.

India and Oman are looking forward to increased engagement in strategic areas such as space cooperation – an MoU on this was signed during Mr. Modi's visit. The possibility of an agreement on joint exploration of rare earth metals, vital to modern electronic equipment, could add strength to the partnership. The proposed India-Middle-East-Europe Connectivity Corridor (IMEEC) infrastructure project to link India to Europe across West Asia could also see Oman playing an important role. There is a proposal from the South Asia Gas Enterprise (SAGE), a private consortium based in India, to lay a 1,400 km long deep-sea pipeline from Oman to India for the transfer of gas. With IMEEC too looking at similar undersea connectivity, there could be convergence on it with Oman in the future.

India's gateway to West Asia

The list of convergence and shared interests is thus long and limitless. As a part of its broader global outlook and its outreach in the extended neighbourhood, India is seeking deeper engagement and collaboration in West Asia, of which Oman is an important pillar. Security challenges in the region have a ripple effect in India and, therefore, any instability in the region has a direct bearing on the safety and security of millions of Indians working there. India's energy security and its steadily growing trade relations. Apart from being India's oldest strategic partner in the region and closest neighbour, Oman is an integral part of all important groupings in the region; the GCC, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the Arab League. Its ability to manage rival ideologies and power games in the region makes it vitally important to India. Both countries consider themselves as ambassadors of peace and enjoy goodwill across ideologies in the world. Oman is, therefore, India's gateway to West Asia. And with the ongoing Israel-Hamas war testing the region to its limits, the visit of Oman's Sultan is timely and very important for India and the region.

- Oman is a crucial pillar of India's West Asia policy, with their multi-faceted engagement increasingly taking on a more strategic shape in recent decades.
- The India-Oman strategic partnership was signed during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Oman in November 2008 and is based on twin pillars of mutual trust and shared interests.
- Oman was one of the few countries to have been invited by India to its G-20 presidency as a guest nation earlier this year.
- Defence and security engagement form a key pillar of this strategic partnership and are governed by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2005.
- Oman is the first Gulf country with which all the three wings of India's defence forces hold joint exercises.
- Since 2012-13, an Indian naval ship has remained on duty in the Gulf of Oman for anti-piracy operations.

The Hindu: GS2-Polity and Governance (Page 11)

NCLAT refuses to stay Zee-Sony merger

Thomas K. Thomas
MUMBAI

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has refused to stay the proposed merger between Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd. (ZEEL) and Sony. Axis Finance and IDBI Bank had

challenged the merger in the NCLAT on ground that ZEEL had stood guarantee for loans they had given to an Essel group entity and they would not be able to recover the loan from ZEEL if the merger progressed.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June, 2016.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), with effect from 1st December, 2016.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) – as per the amendment brought to Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 by Section 172 of the Finance Act, 2017, with effect from 26th May, 2017.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against the orders of the National Financial Reporting Authority – as per the amendment brought to Section 410 (a) of the Companies Act, 2013

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Indian Express: S&T–GS 3

On AI, innovation vs safety

Last month's declaration at the AI summit in the UK focussed on minimising risks. The New Delhi GPAI declaration has found a middle path between promotion and regulation of the revolutionary new tech

SOUMYARENDRA BARIK
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 15

THE 29-MEMBER Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) has unanimously adopted the New Delhi declaration that underscores the need to mitigate risks from the development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) systems, and to promote equitable access to critical resources for AI innovation, including computing and high-quality diverse datasets.

The declaration adopted on Thursday contrasts with the agreement signed at the United Kingdom AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park, Buckinghamshire, a month ago, where countries had committed to first tackle the risks emanating from AI systems.

The New Delhi declaration has attempted to find a balance between innovation and the risks associated with AI systems. While it is largely upbeat about the economic benefits that AI can bring, it also flags issues of fairness, privacy, and intellectual property rights that will have to be taken into consideration.



Union Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar (centre) at the GPAI Summit in New Delhi with representatives of other member countries. *Rajeev_GolIX*

of the GPAI.

How is the world viewing the New Delhi declaration?

Experts have cautioned that such agree-

among countries that share the same values.

"We will solve the small problems easily. But the big challenges, where many people are involved or everybody is involved, are much harder to solve... You have to share

foundation generative AI models that could possess dangerous capabilities that can pose severe risks to public safety.

The countries agreed that they would build "risk-based" policies to ensure AI safety and collaborate as appropriate, "while recognising our approaches may differ based on national circumstances and applicable legal frameworks".

"This includes, alongside increased transparency by private actors developing frontier AI capabilities, appropriate evaluation metrics, tools for safety testing, and developing relevant public sector capability and scientific research," they said in the declaration.

What is India's official position on the regulation of artificial intelligence?

Even as India looks to unlock the potential economic benefits of AI systems, its own thinking on AI regulation has undergone a significant change — from not considering any legal intervention on regulating AI in the country a few months ago, to now moving in the direction of actively formulating regulations based on a "risk-based, user-harm" approach.

- The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) Summit, a congregation of 29 member nations including the European Union announced the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration,
 - The declaration agreed to collaboratively develop AI applications in healthcare and agriculture, as well as including the needs of the Global South in development of AI.

Do you know ?

- the declaration that was signed at the UK AI Safety Summit put security and safety risks related to AI in the centre of the discussions.

Indian Express : GS 2-Polity and Governance

Why the Bombay HC pulled up the Election Commission over Pune bypoll

OMKAR GOKHALE
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 15

THE BOMBAY High Court on Wednesday directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) to immediately conduct a bypoll for the Pune Lok Sabha constituency. The seat had become vacant after sitting MP Girish Bapat died on March 29.

A division Bench of Justice Gautam S Patel and Justice Kamal R Khata pulled up the Commission for "abdication of its constitutional duties".

What was the petition?

Supriyo Joshi, a law graduate and registered voter in Pune constituency, approached the High Court on November 7.

He challenged a certificate issued by the ECI on August 23, stating that it was facing "difficulty" in holding the Pune by-election. Joshi had accessed the ECI certificate through an application under the RTI Act.

He argued that as per section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, a Parliamentary vacancy should be filled within six months, and therefore, the Pune by-election should have been held by September 28.

Joshi submitted that constituents had had no voice in Parliament over the past few months, especially over significant delays in several developmental projects in Pune.

How did the ECI respond?

The ECI argued that Joshi had no locus standi to file a writ petition, and instead he

could have filed a PIL. The poll body argued that if the bypoll is held, the returned candidate would hardly have a few months to work as an MP. It further argued that it had a "genuine difficulty" in conducting the bypoll as its whole machinery was far too busy with preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

What does the law say?

Under Section 151A of the RP Act, by-elections should be held within six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy. The first exception to this is under section 151A (a), which says that the six-month rule will not apply when the remainder of the Parliament term is less than one year. Another exception under section 151A (b)

EXPLAINED LAW

to not hold bypolls is consultation between EC and the Centre, certifying "difficulty" in holding the election within six months.

What did the Bombay HC say?

The High Court held that the petitioner had locus to file a writ petition, being a voter of the constituency. The HC also noted that "constituencies cannot remain unrepresented beyond a defined period".

It observed that as the term of the current Lok Sabha ends on June 16, 2024 and the Pune LS seat had been vacant since March 29, 2023, the first exception did not apply.

What did the HC say about the ECI?

The HC termed the ECI's argument as

"one that borders on the bizarre" and amounts to "sabotaging the entire constitutional democratic framework".

It noted that the ECI's stand was "inconsistent", as it had conducted several other elections since the Pune seat fell vacant.

Did the ECI consult the Centre?

The ECI consulted with the Union Law and Justice Ministry on August 11, and the Centre responded on the same date. "We have not known governments to be able to consult, deliberate, and act with such extraordinary despatch. This correspondence reveals no underlying material," the HC remarked. While the High Court has directed the ECI to immediately take all steps to hold the Pune election, the poll body can move the Supreme Court, given that only a few

months remain for the Lok Sabha elections.

How many Lok Sabha seats are vacant?

Eighteen Lok Sabha seats are currently vacant. Of these 18 were vacated this month by legislators who won in the recently concluded state Assembly elections.

Of the remaining three seats were vacated between March and May this year due to deaths. These include Girish Bapat's (BJP) Pune seat, Balu Dhanorkar's (Congress) Chandrapur seat, and Ratan Lal Katana's (BJP) Ambala seat.

Azad Ansari's (BSP) Chazipur seat was vacated on May 1, after he was sentenced to four years in prison. Finally, TMC's Mahua Moitra vacated her Krishnaganas seat after being expelled from Lok Sabha over the alleged 'cash-for-query' scam.

What the RoP Act, 1951 say about time limit to fill vacancies?



- Section 151A of RoPA prescribes that the by-elections shall be held within a period of six months from the date of the occurrence of the vacancy.
- The first exception to this is provided under section 151A (a), which says that the six-month rule will not apply when the remainder of the Parliament term is less than one year.
- Another exception under section 151A (b) to not hold bypolls is consultation between EC and the Central government, certifying 'difficulty' to hold the same within six months.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB: GS 2-Welfare Schemes / GS3-Economy



Ministry of Defence

DARE TO DREAM SCHEME

Posted On: 15 DEC 2023 3:03PM by PIB Delhi

The details of the applications received under the Dare to Dream (D2D) contests during the last three years are enumerated below:

S No	Dare to Dream (D2D) Contest	Year of Contest	No. of Application received
1.	Dare to Dream-1	2019	3080
2.	Dare to Dream-2	2020	1750
3.	Dare to Dream-3	2021	819
4.	Dare to Dream-4	2023	792

- DRDO has been launching Dare to Dream Contest every year since 2019 to bring together innovators, entrepreneurs, individuals above 18 years and start-ups (recognised by DPIIT and with Indian founders) for innovative ideas in the field of Defence and Aerospace.
- The selection criteria for evaluation of the entries are completeness of proposal, scientific soundness, design completeness, merit, technological readiness level achieved and innovation.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

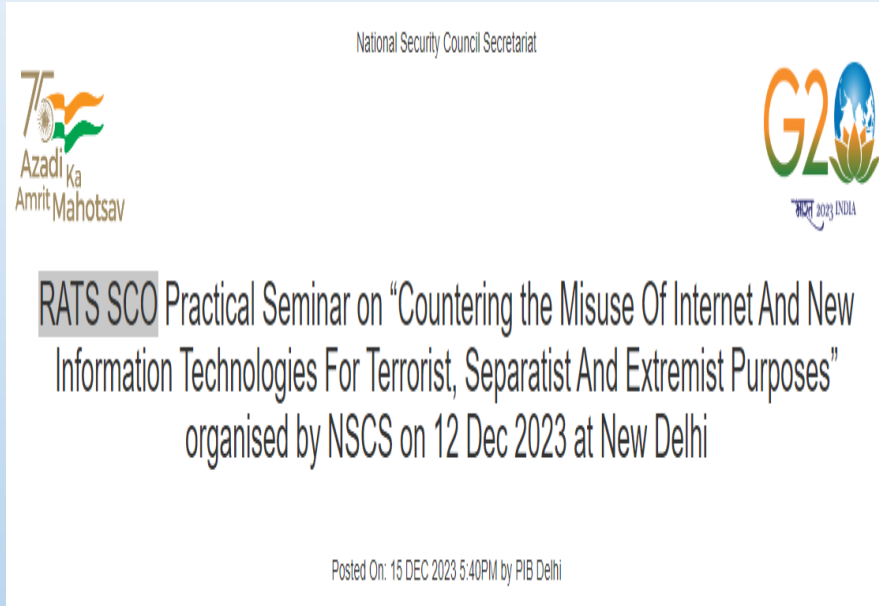
PIB: IR-GSII / Economy-GS3



- Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) is a joint initiative of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supporting countries in building tax audit capacity.
- TIWB Programmes complement the broader efforts of the international community to strengthen co-operation on tax matters and contribute to the domestic resource mobilisation efforts of developing countries.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

PIB: IR-GSII



- The Agreement on establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure designated as a permanent body of the SCO was signed during a meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the SCO Member States on June 7, 2002, in St. Petersburg.
- Since its establishment, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO RATS) has made a significant contribution to the development of the Organization and has become its supporting pillar and coordinating center in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism at the regional and global levels.
-