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IMPLEMENTATION OF POSH ACT TO POLITICAL PARTIES

The Supreme Court recently heard a PIL advocating for the application of The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (commonly known as the **POSH Act, 2013**) to political parties.

The petitioner highlighted inconsistencies in the presence of Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) within political parties to address sexual harassment complaints.

The court directed the petitioner to approach the Election Commission of India (ECI), deeming it the appropriate authority to encourage political parties to establish mechanisms compliant with the POSH Act.

This case has raised questions about the applicability of the POSH Act to organisations like political parties, which often do not conform to conventional workplace structures.

The PoSH Act 2013:

- **Background - Vishakha v. The State of Rajasthan (1997):**
 - The SC issued the **Vishaka Guidelines**, with the primary objective of providing a mechanism for workplace sexual misconduct redress and grievance processes.
 - These recommendations inspired the PoSH Act - a law administered by the Union **Ministry of Women & Child Development (MoWCD)**.
- **Objective of the PoSH Act:**
 - It aims to protect the **rights of women** at work and to **make the workplace a safer place** for them.
 - The legislation also functions as a forum for **both avoiding and addressing problems**.

Applicability of the POSH Act to Political Parties: Legal Challenges

- **Section 3(1) of the POSH Act**

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- Section 3(1) of the POSH Act ensures protection against sexual harassment for women at workplaces.
 - The Act broadly defines "workplace" to include both public and private organisations, hospitals, sports venues, homes, and locations visited during employment.
 - However, its application to political parties is unclear due to their unique structure.
 - **Issue raised by the Kerala HC**
 - The Kerala High Court addressed this in **Centre for Constitutional Rights Research and Advocacy v. State of Kerala & Ors (2022)**.
 - The court ruled that political parties lack an employer-employee relationship with their members and do not fit the definition of a "workplace" under the POSH Act.
 - Consequently, political parties were deemed not liable to establish Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs).
 - This raises legal and structural challenges in ensuring accountability for sexual harassment within political organisations.
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SANGANER OPEN AIR JAIL

- The **Model Prisons and Correctional Services Act, 2023**, defines open correctional institutions as facilities offering eligible prisoners more freedom outside regular prisons to aid their rehabilitation.
- Since prisons are a state subject, state governments set their own rules for establishing open jails, with eligibility typically based on the nature of the crime, inmate behavior, and sentence completion.
- **Features**
 - Open jails have minimal security, allowing convicts to engage in activities like agriculture.

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- These facilities help reduce overcrowding in regular prisons and facilitate prisoner reintegration into society.
- Some states designate separate areas within closed jails for open jail inmates, while others establish independent colonies where prisoners may live with their spouses under restricted movement.

Sanganer Open Jail: A Model for Open-Air Camps

- **Historical Background**
 - The Sanganer open jail, also known as Sampurnanand Khula Bandi Shivir, was established in 1963.
 - It has operated continuously, unlike other open jails that faced closures due to issues like prison breaks.
- **Unique Features**
 - **Accommodation for Families:** Inmates can live with their spouses and children, fostering a family-like environment.
 - **Self-Sufficiency:** Inmates pay for water and electricity, construct and maintain their own homes, and earn a living through local community jobs such as running shops.
 - **Self-Governance:** The jail has bandi panchayats, where prisoners manage roll calls twice daily and oversee internal governance.
- **Infrastructure and Community Integration**
 - **Facilities:** The complex includes a primary school (open to local children), anganwadis, and a playground.
 - **Work Opportunities:** Inmates work within the local community, ensuring financial independence.
 - **Access to Technology:** Inmates have access to phones, promoting better communication.
- **Inmate Selection Criteria**



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- Unlike most open jails, where prisoners nearing the end of their sentence are admitted.
- Sanganer requires prisoners to have completed at least 6 years and 8 months of their term, along with good conduct.
- **Legacy and Influence**
 - The Mulla Committee recommended replicating Sanganer as the “final stage in the open camp movement.”
 - Inspired by its success, many additional open-air camps have been established in Rajasthan, making it the state with the highest number of such facilities in India.

INDIA'S EASTERN MARITIME CORRIDOR

India has emerged as the largest buyer of Russian oil in 2024, surpassing China. Strengthening this trade relationship, the newly operational Eastern Maritime Corridor (EMC) between **Chennai and Vladivostok** has revolutionised trade logistics, reducing shipment times and costs significantly.

This route has become **instrumental in boosting the trade of crude oil, coal,** and other commodities between the two nations.

Key Highlights of the Eastern Maritime Corridor:



Reduced transit time and costs:

- The Chennai-Vladivostok route spans **5,600 nautical miles**, reducing transit time to **24 days** compared to over 40 days via the traditional St. Petersburg-Mumbai route.
- Savings are realised in both **shipment time and transportation costs**, making Russian crude oil more accessible and affordable for India.
- **Strategic ports in operation:**
 - **Vladivostok:** Russia's largest Pacific port, situated near the Sino-Russian border, serves as the primary starting point.

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- **Indian ports:** Major eastern ports like Chennai, Paradip, Visakhapatnam, Tuticorin, Ennore, and Kolkata are utilised for receiving shipments based on cargo type and destination.
- **Key commodities traded:**
 - **Imports from Russia:** Crude oil, coal, fertilisers, vegetable oils, and iron and steel dominate both value and quantity metrics.
 - **Exports to Russia:** Processed minerals, iron and steel, tea, granite, marine products, and processed fruits are leading commodities shipped from India.

Strategic and Economic Significance of EMC for India:

- **Strengthening bilateral ties:**
 - The EMC facilitates greater economic engagement, helping **balance Moscow's increasing tilt toward China.**
 - A strong trade relationship aligns with India's broader strategic interests, including its defence reliance on Russia.
- **Diversification of energy supplies:**
 - With an 85% dependency on oil imports, India's growing trade with Russia **diversifies its energy portfolio.**
 - Affordable Russian oil bolsters India's energy security and economic stability.
- **Upcoming diplomatic engagement:** Russian President Vladimir Putin is scheduled to visit India in 2025, signaling the importance of this evolving partnership.

Conclusion:

- The operationalisation of the EMC has emerged as a **game-changer in India-Russia trade**, significantly reducing transit times and costs.
 - By leveraging this route, India has solidified its position as a major buyer of Russian crude while diversifying its energy imports.
 - Beyond economic gains, the corridor enhances India's strategic leverage, ensuring deeper engagement with Russia amidst shifting global dynamics.
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SEARCH AND RESCUE AID TOOL (SARAT)



- It was **launched in 2016** for **facilitating search and rescue operations** in the seas to locate individuals/vessels in distress in the shortest possible time.
- This has been initiated and developed under the Make in India program **and developed by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)**.

Working

- The tool uses model ensembling that accounts for uncertainties in the initial location as well as the last known time of the missing object, to locate the person or object with high probability.
- The movements of the missing objects are governed **mainly by the currents and winds**.
- The tool is based on model currents derived from a very **high-resolution Regional Ocean Modelling System** run operationally on High-Performance Computers at INCOIS.
- The user has the option to select up to **60 types of missing objects** (based on shape and buoyancy).
- Users can select a specific point where the object was last seen using the interactive map or they can also select a coastal location, distance travelled and bearing angle so that the last known location of the missing object is estimated.
- The results **generated are displayed in an interactive map** depicting the probable area to be searched and are also sent as text messages to emails/mobile phones.
- All the requests and responses are **provided in the languages of the coastal states** so that local fishermen can use them immediately to search for their fellow fishermen in distress.



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NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION AWARD



- It is an initiative by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** under the Ministry of Power.
- It was instituted in 1991, alongside the declaration of National Energy Conservation Day (**December 14**).
- These awards honour the exceptional efforts of industrial units, institutions, and establishments that have significantly reduced energy consumption while maintaining or enhancing their operational efficiency.

Selection procedure

- The **Award Committee, chaired by the Secretary (Power)**, reviews and approves the sectors eligible for the NECA.
- Afterward, the Technical Committee's recommendations are submitted to the **Award Committee for final consideration** and approval.
- The selected awardees from various sectors are then honored and felicitated on National Energy Conservation Day

Key facts about the Bureau of Energy Efficiency

- It was established on 1st March 2002 under the provisions of the **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**.
- The mission of the Bureau is to **assist in developing policies** and strategies with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles.
- A key **objective is reducing the energy intensity** of the Indian economy.
- It coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies and other organizations.
- It recognises, identifies and utilises the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Act.
- The Act also provides for regulatory and promotional functions.



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JALVAHAK SCHEME



- It aims to **unlock the trade potential of inland waterways** while reducing logistics costs and decongesting road and rail networks.
 - Under the scheme, **cargo owners transporting goods** over distances exceeding 300 km via waterways will receive up to **35 per cent reimbursement** on operating costs.
 - The scheme will **remain valid for three years** and is designed to optimise supply chains for major shipping companies, freight forwarders, and trade bodies.
 - It is a major step towards promoting sustainable and cost-effective transportation across **National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak river)**.
 - The Jalvahak scheme incentivises long-haul cargo transport and ensures timely delivery through regular freight services.
 - The Fixed Day Scheduled Sailing Service will ply vessels between the Kolkata - Patna - Varanasi - Patna - Kolkata stretch of NW 1 and between Kolkata and Pandu in Guwahati on NW 2 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR).
- **Implemented by:** It is jointly implemented by the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and Inland & Coastal Shipping Ltd (ICSL)**.



KEY FACTS ABOUT GOLAN HEIGHTS

- It is a **hilly area overlooking the upper Jordan River valley** on the west.
- It is a **Syrian territory occupied by Israel since 1967**.
- The area's name is from the biblical city of refuge Golan in Bashan.
- It is **bounded by the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee on the west, Mount Hermon on the north, the seasonal Wadi Al-Ruqqād River on the east, and the Yarmūk River on the south**.

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- It extends about 71 km from north to south and about 43 km from east to west at its widest point.
- It is **roughly boat-shaped** and has an area of 1,150 sq.km.

History:

- The area was part of extreme **southwestern Syria until 1967** when it came under **Israeli military occupation** in the closing stages of the **1967 Six-Day War**.
- **Most of the Syrian Arab inhabitants fled the area** during the conflict.
- Syria tried to retake the Golan Heights during the 1973 Middle East war, but the attempt was thwarted.
- In **December 1981, Israel unilaterally annexed** the part of the Golan it held.
- It's **considered occupied territory under international law** and UN Security Council resolutions.
- There are more than **30 Israeli settlements** in the Golan Heights, which are home to an estimated **20,000 people**.
- They are **considered illegal under international law**, which Israel disputes.

Strategic Importance:

- The **Syrian capital, Damascus**, can be clearly seen from the top of the Golan Hills.
 - It **overlooks northern Israel's Galilee region** and the **Sea of Galilee** and dominates the route to Damascus on the Syrian-controlled side.
 - Importantly, the Golan Heights **shares a border with Jordan and Lebanon**.
 - The area is also a **key source of water** for an arid region. Rainwater from the Golan's catchment feeds into the Jordan River.
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