

BRIBES FOR VOTES CASE - SC SAYS MLAS AND MPS NOT IMMUNE FROM PROSECUTION

Why in news?

- A seven-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court said that Members of Parliament and state legislatures who take bribes to vote or speak in a certain manner in the House are not immune from prosecution.
- With this judgement, the apex court has overruled its 1998 judgment (JMM bribery case) which granted immunity to such lawmakers.

Privileges and Immunities to the MPs and MLAs:

- **Meaning:** Privileges are special rights, immunities and exemptions enjoyed by the two Houses of Parliament and legislature of States, and their committees and their members.
 - The Constitution has also extended these privileges to those persons who are entitled to speak and take part in the proceedings of a House or any of its committees.
 - For example, the **Attorney General of India**.
- **Constitutional provisions:** **Article 105** and **Article 194** to the **Constitution of India** grant privileges or advantages to the MPs (Article 105) and to the MLAs (Article 194) of every State.

Privileges mentioned in the Constitution:

- It gives the MPs **freedom of speech** [Article 115 (1)].
- It provides that **no MP will be liable** to any proceedings before any Court for anything said or any vote given by him/her in the Parliament or any committee thereof [Article 105(2)].
 - Also, **no person will be held liable for any publication of any report, paper, votes or proceedings** if the publication is made by the parliament or any authority under it.

- The same provisions are stated under **Article 194**, where MLAs of a state are referred instead of MPs.
- **Purpose:** These privileges and immunities -
 - Are granted so that MPs/MLAs can perform their duties or can function properly without any hindrances - essential for democratic functioning of the legislatures.
 - Without these privileges,
 - The Houses can neither maintain their authority, dignity and honour.
 - Nor can protect their members from any obstruction in the discharge of their parliamentary responsibilities.

Key highlights of the current judgement

- **No immunity on the charges of accepting bribe**
 - An individual member of the legislature cannot assert a claim of privilege to seek immunity under Articles 105 and 194 from prosecution on a charge of bribery in connection with a vote or speech in the legislature.
- **Accepting bribes do not pertain to the duties of lawmakers**
 - Accepting a bribe is a **separate crime** that is not linked to the actions or words of a lawmaker within the Parliament or legislative assembly.
 - Therefore, the immunity provided under Articles 105 and 194 does not extend to cases of bribery, as these do not pertain to the duties of lawmakers.
- **Threat to the functioning of Indian parliamentary democracy**
 - The court cautioned that granting such protection would create a group of individuals who enjoy unregulated exemption from the law.
 - It emphasized that corruption and bribery by legislators have the potential to undermine the functioning of Indian parliamentary democracy.
- **On the question of when the offence of bribery is considered as complete**
 - The court stated that the bribery is considered complete once the offer or agreement to bribe is made, regardless of whether the vote is cast in the agreed direction or if the vote is cast at all.

DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM

Recently, the Minister of Communications, Railway, and Electronics & Information Technology launched the Department of Telecommunications (DoT)'s 'Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)' and 'Chakshu' facility on Sanchar Saathi portal.



Digital Intelligence Platform is developed by the Department of Telecommunications. It is a secure and integrated platform for real time intelligence sharing, information exchange and coordination among the stakeholders, Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), law enforcement agencies (LEAs), banks and financial institutions (FIs), social media platforms, identity document issuing authorities etc.

- The portal also contains information regarding the **cases detected as misuse of telecom resources.**
- It also **works as backend repository** for the citizen-initiated requests on the Sanchar Saathi portal for action by the stakeholders.
- The DIP is accessible to the stakeholders over secure connectivity and the relevant information is shared based on their respective roles. The said **platform is not accessible to citizens.**

What is Chakshu?

- It is the latest addition to the citizen centric facilities already available **on the Sanchar Saathi portal of DoT.**
- It facilitates citizens to **report suspected fraud communication** received over call, SMS or WhatsApp with the intention of defrauding like KYC expiry or update of bank account/payment wallet/SIM/gas connection/electricity connection, sextortion, impersonation as government official/relative for sending money, disconnection of all mobile numbers by Department of Telecommunications etc.
- In case, a citizen is already a victim of cyber-crime or financial fraud, it is advised to report at cyber-crime helpline number 1930 or website <https://www.cybercrime.gov.in> of Government of India.

RISA TEXTILE

Tripura's traditional tribal attire 'risa' received the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.



Risa Textile is a handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment and also as headgear, a stole, or a present to express respect.

- It is woven in colourful designs and has a **crucial social and religious significance**.
 - Adolescent Tripuri girls are first given a risa to wear in an event called **Risa Sormani**, around age 12 to 14.
 - **Religious relevance:** The risa is used in religious festivals such as Garia Puja by tribal communities, a turban by men during weddings and festivals, a cummerbund over the dhoti, a head scarf by young girls and boys and a muffler during winters.
 - It is presented as a mark of **honour to distinguished recipients**.
 - Risa is common in almost all 19 indigenous tribal communities of Tripura.
 - The traditional Tripuri female attire consists of three parts — risa, rignai and rikutu.
 - **Risa** is a handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment.
 - **Rignai** is primarily worn as the lower garment and literally means 'to wear'.
 - **Rituku** is mainly used as a wrap, or like a 'chunri' or a 'pallu' of the Indian saree.
- It is also used to cover the heads of newly married Tripuri women.
- The complete Tripuri attire is claimed to have originated even before the time of the Manikya kings, who ruled Tripura for over 500 years starting from the 15th century.

ADITI SCHEME

Union Minister of Defence launched the ADITI scheme during DefConnect 2024.



- **Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI)** is a scheme to promote innovations in critical and **strategic defence technologies**.
- **Aim:** It aims to develop about **30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies** in the proposed timeframe.

- **Eligibility:** Under this scheme **start-ups are eligible** to receive **grant-in-aid of up to Rs 25 crore** for their research, development and innovation endeavours in defence technology.
- **Time period:** This scheme worth **Rs 750 crore** for the period **2023-24 to 2025-26**.
- It falls under the iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) framework of Department of Defence Production, **Ministry of Defence**.
- It also envisages to create a '**Technology Watch Tool**' to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the modern Armed Forces and the capabilities of the defence innovation ecosystem.
- In the first edition of ADITI, **17 challenges** – Indian Army (3), Indian Navy (5), Indian Air Force (5) and Defence Space Agency (4) - have been launched.
- To motivate young innovators, iDEX was expanded to iDEX Prime, with the assistance increasing from Rs 1.5 crore to Rs 10 crore.

NEED FOR REFORMING BAIL LAWS IN INDIA

Background:

- Over 75% of India's prison population are undertrials while overcrowding in Indian prisons stands at 118%.
- The Court provided comprehensive guidelines on laws related to bail.
 - This includes mandating timelines for the disposal of bail applications and laying emphasis on the need to enact a separate legislation.

What is 'Bail'?

- Bail refers to the provisional release of the accused in a criminal case in which the court is yet to announce the judgment.
- The term 'bail' means the security that is deposited in order to secure the release of the accused.

Conditions for Grant of Bail in Bailable/Non-Bailable Offences:

- **Conditions for bail in bailable offence are:**

- There are sufficient reasons to believe that the accused has not committed the offence.
- There is sufficient reason to conduct further enquiry in the matter.
- The person is not accused of any offence punishable with death, life imprisonment or imprisonment up to 10 years.
- **Conditions for grant of bail in non-bailable offences:**
 - If the accused is a woman or a child, bail can be granted in a non-bailable offence.
 - If there is lack of evidence then bail in non-Bailable offences can be granted.
 - If there is delay in lodging FIR by the complainant, bail may be granted.
 - If the accused is gravely sick.

Cancellation of Bail:

- Court has the power to cancel the bail even at a later stage.
- The Court can cancel the bail granted by it and give directions to the police officer to arrest the person and keep in police custody.

Challenges in Bail Compliance:

- **A large number of undertrials continue to remain in prison** despite being granted bail due to challenges in complying with bail conditions.
- **Lack of means to arrange for money/property and local sureties** are the most significant reasons accounting for an undertrial's inability to comply with bail conditions.
- Factors such as lack of residence and identity proof, abandonment by family and limitations in navigating the court system also undermine an undertrial's ability to comply with bail conditions.
- Data shows that in 14% of cases, undertrials were unable to comply with bail conditions and remained in prison despite being granted bail.
- There is an urgent need for bail reform but it would be counterproductive to undertake a reform exercise without first developing the empirical basis to understand and diagnose the problem at hand.

WOMEN, BUSINESS AND LAW INDEX

India's ranked improved to 113 out of 190 countries in the World Bank's Women, Business and Law index.



- It is a World Bank index to measure **how laws and regulations affect women's economic opportunity** on a scale from 0 to 100, where 100 means equal legal rights for men and women.
- The report covers **eight related areas**: Mobility, workplace, pay, marriage, parenthood, entrepreneurship, assets and pension.
- The data offer objective and measurable benchmarks for evaluating global progress toward **legal gender equality**.
- **Highlights of 2024 Index:**
 - It is the **10th edition** of the report.
 - Globally, **none of the countries has a full score** in the new index, indicating that women did not enjoy equal rights in any of the countries.
 - **India's ranking** improved to **113 out of 190 countries**.
 - **Indian women enjoyed 60% of the legal rights given to men** as per the new report, lower than the global average of 64.2%.

INDIA'S 3-STAGE NUCLEAR PROGRAM

- India's three-stage nuclear power programme was formulated by the well-known physicist **Homi Bhabha** in the 1950s -
 - To achieve country's long term energy security, independence and sustainable development,
 - Through the use of uranium and vast thorium reserves.
- **The three stages are:**
 - **Natural uranium** fuelled Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)
 - Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) utilising **plutonium-based** fuel

- Advanced nuclear power systems for utilisation of **thorium**
- **Thorium is particularly attractive for India**, as India has only around 1–2% of the global uranium reserves, but one of the largest shares of global thorium reserves (~25%).
 - However, **thorium is more difficult to use than uranium** as a fuel because it requires breeding, and global uranium prices remain low enough that breeding is not cost effective.
- **The Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)** is carrying out indigenous R&D activities for development of Advanced Nuclear Power systems in line with the 3-stage nuclear power program.
- The three stages are expected to allow the country **complete self-sufficiency** in nuclear energy.

Challenges Ahead for the Stage II of India's Nuclear Program:

- **FBRs are harder to handle than other reactor designs.**
 - The thorium fuel cycle produces **caesium-137**, actinium-227, radium-224, radium-228, and thorium-230, which are all radioactive in ways that complicate their handling and storage.
- In 2015, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) urged India to set up **an independent statutory atomic regulator instead.**
- Today, **the tariff** for solar electricity is under Rs 2.5/kWh whereas nuclear electricity costs around Rs 4/kWh.
- **The 2011 Fukushima Daiichi disaster** also shifted public opinion worldwide against nuclear power, slowing work on new facilities.
- However, **nuclear power has a new lease on life** as a result of India's pressure to decarbonise, cut its fossil fuel imports, and give its renewables sector some breathing space.
 - In 2023, NPCIL stated that it expects to "**commission a nuclear power reactor every year**" beginning in 2024.

SUPER TUESDAY - A KEY DAY IN THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

How US elections work?

- **Primaries and Caucuses**
 - As part of the Presidential elections, American voters first vote in the primary and caucus polls, or in a third setup that is a combination of the two.
 - In primaries, voters go to polling stations and check the box against the name of their favoured candidate.
 - In comparison, caucuses are lengthier. Voters attend meetings at public places such as school gymnasiums, churches, and community centres, debate candidate preferences and openly raise their hands for their choice of vote.

- **National Conventions of Each Party**
 - After the primaries and caucuses are over, a national convention is held in which a party's nomination for president is formally announced to the public.
 - During the convention, the elected delegates cast their vote for a party candidate and the candidate with the most delegates gets the party's nomination.

What is a Super Tuesday?

- Super Tuesday is the day when the largest number of states hold their presidential primaries and caucuses.
- Those state-level races help candidates from the two major political groups — the Democrats and the Republicans.
 - Based on the result of each contest, party officials known as delegates are awarded to the top candidates.
 - A certain number of delegates is needed to formally appoint the nominee at each party's convention this summer.
- Delegates ultimately represent their states at a party convention, where they cast votes for the nominee based on the primary and caucus results.