

APRIL

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MK Yadav Sir

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G7 way off-track in emission cuts to achieve 1.5°C target; finding significant as WMO says Asia 'global disaster capital'

Context: The State of the Climate in Asia 2023" report has shed light on Asia's susceptibility to climate-related disasters, with floods, storms, and heatwaves.

The State of the Climate in Asia 2023

- **About:** The report provides a comprehensive assessment of the climate conditions and associated impacts in Asia during the year 2023.
- **Based on:** Data collected from National Meteorological and Hydrological Services, United Nations partners, and a network of climate experts.
- **Publisher:** World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Key Findings:

- **Disaster Vulnerability:** Asia was identified as the world's most disaster-prone region in 2023, with floods, storms, and heatwaves causing significant casualties and economic losses.
- **Temperature Rise:** Eastern and northern India recorded the highest temperature rise.
 - The annual mean near-surface temperature over Asia in 2023 was the second-highest on record, 0.91°C above the 1991-2020 average and 1.87 °C above the 1961-1990 average.
- **India specific findings:**
 - **Temperature Rise:**
 - Average temperatures in 2023 increased by 0.5 to 1 degree Celsius in **eastern India** compared to the average of 1991-2021.
 - States like West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, and northern states experienced significant warming trends.
 - **Sea Level Rise:** Satellite measurements revealed an annual increase of 4.44 mm in **sea levels in the Bay of Bengal** from January 1993 to May 2023.
 - Incidentally, the **Sundarbans**, on the coast of West Bengal, have been found to have the **highest sea level rise in India**.

World

Organization (WMO)

Meteorological

- **About:** It is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- **Function:** It is the UN system's authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere, its interaction with the oceans, the climate it produces and the resulting distribution of water resources.
- **Established in 1950,** WMO became the specialized agency of the United Nations in 1951 for meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences.
- **Headquarter:** Geneva, Switzerland.

50 YRS OF PORTUGAL'S CARNATION REVOLUTION: HOW EUROPE'S LONGEST DICTATORSHIP WAS OVERTHROWN

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, APRIL 25

THOUSANDS SPILT on to the streets on Thursday to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Portugal's 'Carnation Revolution' that toppled the longest fascist dictatorship in Europe and ushered in democracy in the country. Antonio Oliveira Salazar ruled Portugal from 1932 to 1968, but the regime lasted for another six years under his successor Marcelo Caetano, finally crumbling on April 25, 1974.

Prof turned prime minister

A professor of political economy at the University of Coimbra, Salazar became Portugal's Finance Minister in 1928. Under him, the financially stressed country made major progress — within a year, Salazar balanced the budget and stabilised Portugal's currency.

He was appointed as Prime Minister of Portugal by the then President and military dictator Antonio Oscar de Fragoso Carmona in 1932, and within a year managed to concentrate political power with himself. In 1933, Salazar established the Estado Novo (literally, "New State") — a conservative, corporatist, and nationalist regime ostensibly built on the values of Portugal's traditional Catholic faith, and with the purpose of maintaining the Portuguese empire, most importantly in Africa.

From 1934 to 1965, Salazar won 100% of all valid votes in Portugal's National Assembly elections, and ruled with an iron fist.

Revolution, decolonisation

The almost bloodless revolution was conducted by a group of junior army officers who wanted democracy, and to put an end to long-running wars against in-

dependence movements in the African colonies of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau.

They regarded those wars, which were killing thousands of young Portuguese conscripts, as unjust and unwinnable, especially given the rapid dismantling of all major European empires. The military coup by the "April's Captains" group touched off rapid decolonisation, ending more than five centuries of Portuguese empire in Africa.

Far Right's Salazar affection

Lisbon University political scientist Antonio Costa Pinto told Reuters that while most Portuguese are proud of the April 25 revolution, the recent surge in

support for the populist, anti-immigration Chega party is the "elephant in the room". "Chega attracts those who have a revisionist view of history with the idea that colonialism and the empire were not bad, and that the glorious Portuguese past and its symbols should be valued," Costa Pinto said.

A study published on Friday by Lisbon's Institute of Social Sciences and research university ISCTE found that 23% of respondents felt that if current political leaders followed the "ideals" of Salazar, Portugal might "regain its greatness". And Chega itself makes frequent public use of Salazar's motto "God, patriotism and family", to which the party has added "work".

Founded in 2019, Chega is the third largest party in Portugal, having quadrupled its cohort of lawmakers to 50 in March's election. Chega has capitalised on the housing crisis unleashed by steadily rising rents as well as low wages, sagging health care and cases of alleged corruption involving the mainstream parties in Western Europe's poorest country.

WITH INPUTS FROM REUTERS



Antonio Salazar left office in 1968. Wikimedia Commons



PORTUGAL

(Syllabus GS Paper 2 – IR/Places in News)

Context: Recently, thousands spilled onto the streets to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Portugal's 'Carnation Revolution,' marking the overthrow of Europe's longest-standing fascist dictatorship and the dawn of democracy in the country.

Carnation Revolution

- **About:** It is also known as the 25 April, occurred in 1974 in Lisbon, Portugal, overthrowing the authoritarian Estado Novo government.
- **Social Impact:** The Carnation Revolution brought about significant social changes in Portugal, fostering a transition towards democracy.
- **Economic Changes:** The revolution led to major economic reforms in Portugal, altering the economic landscape of the country.
- **Political Transformation:** The Carnation Revolution marked a turning point in Portuguese politics, ushering in a new era of democracy and ending authoritarian rule.
- **Overseas Colonies:** The revolution had profound effects on Portugal's overseas colonies, leading to decolonization processes and the end of the Portuguese Colonial War.

Portugal

- **About:** Situated along the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula, holds a significant place in southwestern Europe.
- **Capital:** Lisbon
- **Borders:** The Portugal-Spain border in the north and east constitutes the longest uninterrupted border-line in the European Union.
- **Mountain:** The highest Portuguese mountain is Mount Pico.
 - The highest peak in Mainland Portugal is Torre in the Serra da Estrela range
- **River:** Tagus River
- **Strait of Gibraltar:** Between Morocco and Portugal
- **Member of:** European Union, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Trade Organization, and NATO.

Why does the Centre want to modify the 2G spectrum verdict?

Why does the Centre want the apex court to revisit its decade-old 2G spectrum scam verdict? Is the allocation of scarce natural resources like spectrum through auction the only way to ensure transparency?

Aaratrika Bhaumik

The story so far:

More than a decade after the Supreme Court cancelled 122 telecom licenses in the landmark 2G spectrum scam judgment, the Union government has moved an application to allocate spectrum administratively, bypassing auctions. An administrative allocation would give the government control over the selection of operators. On Monday, Attorney General R. Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre made a plea for urgent listing of the application before Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud. The development comes a month after the Delhi High Court admitted the CBI's appeal against the acquittal of former Union Telecom Minister A. Raja and other high-profile politicians in the scam.

What is the 2G spectrum scam?

The alleged 2G spectrum allocation scam is said to have originated in 2008 when the then Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government sold 122 2G licences on a first-come-first-serve (FCFS)

basis to specific telecom operators. In its charge sheet filed in April 2011, the CBI alleged that there was a loss of ₹30,984 crore to the exchequer as a result of discrepancies in the allocation process.

In the meantime, the Centre for Public Interest Litigation and Subramanian Swamy filed petitions in the top Court alleging a ₹70,000 crore scam in the grant of telecom licenses in 2008. In February 2012, a division Bench of the Supreme Court cancelled the licenses while cautioning that an FCFS basis for the allocation of scarce natural resources can be prone to misuse.

Advocating for competitive auctions instead, the Court said, "In our view, a duly publicised auction conducted fairly and impartially is perhaps the best method for discharging this burden and the methods like first-come-first-served when used for alienation of natural resources/public property are likely to be misused by unscrupulous people who are only interested in garnering maximum financial benefit and have no respect for the constitutional ethos and values." It emphasised that the burden lies on the State to ensure that the

"non-discriminatory method" of the auction is adopted "by giving wide publicity so that all eligible persons can participate in the process".

What is the Centre's plea?

In its plea, the Centre has pointed out that the assignment of spectrum is required to discharge sovereign and public interest functions such as security, safety, and disaster preparedness. The Centre elaborated that administrative allocation is required when demand is lower than supply or for space communication. In such cases, it would be "more optimal and efficient for spectrum to be shared by multiple players, rather than being broken up into smaller blocks for the sole purpose of exclusive assignment", it said.

The Court was apprised that following its 2012 ruling, the administrative assignment of non-commercial spectrum has been on a purely interim basis, subject to the government's final decision on pricing and policy. However, it was now time to "firm up a spectrum assignment framework in suitable cases to best subserve the common good", the government said. Accordingly, the plea

Context: Recently, over a decade after the Supreme Court cancelled 122 telecom licenses in the landmark 2G spectrum scam judgment, the Union government has filed an application to allocate spectrum administratively, bypassing auctions.

2G Spectrum

- **About:** It is a combination of three cases, one filed by Enforcement Directorate and two cases registered by the CBI.
- **Timeline of Events:** The scam is said to have originated in 2008 with the sale of 122 2G licenses on a first-come-first-serve basis to specific telecom operators.
- **Allegations by CBI:** In April 2011, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a charge sheet alleging a loss of ₹30,984 crore to the exchequer due to discrepancies in the allocation process.
- **Sovereignty of Spectrum:** It is a sovereign asset overseen by governments or designated national regulatory authorities, which manage and issue licenses for its use in each country.
- **Vital Infrastructure:** Spectrum serves as invisible infrastructure, enabling wireless connectivity crucial for modern economies and societies.
- **Importance of Spectrum Allocation:** Spectrum relates to the radio frequencies allocated to various sectors, including the mobile industry, for communication over airwaves.
 - Spectrum facilitates a wide range of services and applications essential for connectivity, including mobile broadband for internet access.

What is the significance of the new telecom law?

- **About:** The new telecom law grants the government increased authority to assign spectrum for telecommunication through administrative processes.
- **Exemptions:** Entities engaged in national security, defence, law enforcement, and certain global mobile communication ventures like Space X and OneWeb, are exempt from spectrum auctions.
- **Secondary Assignees:** The law allows for the assignment of parts of spectrum already allocated to primary entities to secondary assignees.
- **Spectrum Utilization Control:** Authorities are empowered to terminate spectrum assignments if they remain underutilized without valid reasons.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)- National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (NIScPR) organizes a national workshop to celebrate World Intellectual Property Day

Context: The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research - National Institute of Science Communication and Policy Research (CSIR-NIScPR) organized a national workshop and celebrated World Intellectual Property Day.

World Intellectual Property Day

- **About:** It is observed annually on 26 April.
- **Established by:** World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2000.
- **Purpose:** It aims to "raise awareness of how patents, copyright, trademarks and designs impact on daily life" and "to celebrate creativity, and the contribution made by creators and innovators to the development of economies and societies across the globe".
- **Outreach Campaign:** World Intellectual Property Day is WIPO's largest intellectual property (IP) public outreach campaign.

Intellectual Property

- **About:** It refers to creations of the mind, such as inventions; literary and artistic works; designs; and symbols, names and images used in commerce.
- **IP is protected in by:** a Law, for example, patents, copyright and trademarks, GI tag etc., which enable people to earn recognition or financial benefit from what they invent or create.
- **Aim:** To foster an environment in which creativity and innovation can flourish.
- **World intellectual property organization (WIPO):** It is the global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information and cooperation.
- **In India:** Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry is the apex body regulating IPR.
 - IPR regime of India is in compliance with the WTO's agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

Global food crisis: 1 in 5 people in need of urgent action

Context: The 2024 Global Report on Food Crisis (GRFC) revealed that extreme weather emerged as the second most significant factor driving food crises, with nearly 282 million people facing high levels of acute food insecurity in 59 countries recently.

Global Report on Food Crisis (GRFC)

- **Preparation:** Annually by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN).
- **Launched by:** The Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC).
- **GNAFC:** A multistakeholder initiative including UN organizations, the EU, the United States Agency for International Development, and NGOs collaborating to address food crises.

2024 Report Analysis

- **Population and Coverage:** The report scrutinized a populace of 1.3 billion across 59 countries in 2023.
- **Food Crisis Overview**
 - **Magnitude of Crisis:** Approximately 282 million individuals encountered elevated levels of acute food insecurity across the surveyed nations in 2023.
 - **Urgency of Action:** One out of every five individuals assessed required immediate critical intervention due to acute food insecurity.
- **Vulnerable Regions Examination**
 - **Conflict Hotspots:** Regions like Palestine (Gaza Strip) and Sudan exhibited a strong correlation between displacement and acute food insecurity.
 - **Sudan's Crisis:** Sudan emerged as the world's largest internal displacement crisis in 2023.
- **Identification of Causes**
 - **Primary:** Conflict and insecurity emerged as the leading cause in 20 countries, directly impacting 135 million individuals.
 - **Secondary Factor:** Extreme weather events followed as the second significant contributor to food insecurity.
 - **Economic Instability:** Economic shocks ranked third, affecting 21 nations, especially low-income and import-dependent countries.

SJVN sets milestone with Inauguration of First Multi-purpose Green Hydrogen Pilot Project of the Nation

Context: SJVN Limited has achieved a significant milestone with the inauguration of India's first Multi-purpose (Combined Heat & Power) Green Hydrogen Pilot Project at SJVN's 1,500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Hydro Power Station (NJHPS) in Jhakri, Himachal Pradesh.

Nathpa Jhakri Hydroelectric Station

- **About:** It stands as the largest hydropower project on the Sutlej River, boasting a capacity of 1,500 MW.
- **Confluence and Formation:** It merges with the Chenab River, giving birth to the Panjnad River, before ultimately meeting the Indus River.
- **Ownership:** The project is under the ownership of SJVN Ltd., a joint venture between the Indian and Himachal Pradesh governments.
- **Government Vision:** The Indian government aims for a comprehensive development plan, envisioning around 30 projects along the Sutlej River.
- **Project Infrastructure:** Valued at USD 2 billion, the Nathpa Jhakri project comprises a 62.5 m-high concrete gravity dam, an extensive underground desilting complex, and a robust hydropower plant with an impressive installed capacity of 1,500 MW.
- **Power allocation from plant:** Northern states of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and the cities of Delhi and Chandigarh.

Sutlej River

- **About:** It is longest of the five tributaries of the Indus River that give the Punjab (meaning "Five Rivers") region its name.
- **Origin:** On the north slope of the Himalayas in Lake Rakshastal in southwestern Tibet.
- **Drainage Basin:** Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Ladakh and Haryana.
- **Tributaries:** Baspa river, spiti river, nogli khad, soan river

'We will never feel the need to change Basic Structure of the Constitution'

No question of ending reservation, says the Defence Minister; he adds that simultaneous polls will surely happen, while more persuasion is needed for a Uniform Civil Code; he alleges that the dip in voter turnout during the first phase of Lok Sabha polls was due to INRA supporters staying away

INTERVIEW

Rajnath Singh

Nishant Hebbar

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has been travelling non-stop as he campaigns for BJP candidates in the Lok Sabha election. He speaks on Uniform Civil Code (UCC), voter turnout and the Opposition's claims on investigative agencies being used to harass them. Excerpt.

The voter turnout in the first phase has slipped and is said to be a cause of worry for the BJP.

It's not an issue of concern for us, because we believe that a majority of those who want the current government to continue turned out to vote. Those who felt that the INDIA Alliance is not in a position to form a government, they possibly felt that it was of no use to vote.

There is talk that this may reflect complacency among BJP supporters on the return of a BJP government.

Some may think that, but it is our duty to reach out to everyone as participants in the democratic process, to inform people of our achievements till now and at the same time, create a

political awareness among people about the democratic exercise. I have always believed that when we campaign, we should also work towards creating a political awareness about democracy among people, so that they too can analyse as to which political party is best suited to govern the country.

In your party's manifesto, for which you headed the committee, a UCC, and One Nation, One Election (ONOE) have emerged as new ideological projects.

I have spoken of ONOE in many campaign stops during these polls itself. I received a strongly positive response from the people, as this is definitely going to happen. As far as UCC is concerned, those who have any misconceptions against it, we will try and persuade them. All progressive communities, in my view, have and should work towards a UCC.

But a Parliamentary Standing Committee headed by the BJP's Nishant Hebbar is of the view that tribal communities should be exempt from the UCC.

Yes. Tribal communities should be exempt and they will be.

How is it a 'uniform' code then, with exemptions?



There are some tribals who are particularly vulnerable, where governments have not been able to reach in the way that they have other communities. Their cultural and social interests have to be especially taken care of. Also, there are no blocks to people observing their culture and traditions, and religious customary rituals.

Many marginal communities seem to be apprehensive of a change in the Constitution and reservations, especially after BJP leaders said that the party needed 400 seats to effect it.

There is no question of ending reservations. I firmly believe that we need reservation proposed by the erstwhile government of united Andhra Pradesh. One should not go against the manush (intention) of the Constitution. These people (the Congress) were the ones who brought in the

talk and fear. If at the age of 18, a young boy joins under the Agnipath-scheme and leaves with an intermediate certificate and that of being well skilled, there are many institutions where there is provision for reservation in jobs for them. At the time of getting out of this programme, at the young age of 22 to 23, they will leave with around ₹5 lakh, and if they want to go into the forces, there are paramilitary forces which they can join, as have big industrial houses.

The Opposition alleges that the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation are being used to harass its leaders and forcing them to join the BJP.

The BJP does not do that; it's the agencies who investigate cases, and if they don't trust agencies, they have the courts, which, I might add, have not given relief on these cases.

There is apprehension being expressed by old-timers in the BJP that too many outsiders are being taken in and rewarded, changing the basic character of the party.

There is no such thing. Every party wants to expand and increase its strength, and I believe this is why the BJP is the largest political party in the world.

Ranganath Mura Commission, the Sachar Committee reports, etc, there were recommendations that within the 27% reservations for OBCs, 8% were to be given to minorities, with 6% for Muslims. This is where certain Muslim backward castes are already included in the list of OBCs and getting reservations.

As Defence Minister, what has been your most challenging issue, and the most rewarding?

If there is a clash or a war-like situation, it is challenging, but our forces responded very well.

As far as our aims are concerned, I was particularly concerned with the indigenisation of our defence items, in which we have moved forward, although there is much more to do.

But the India-China border issue remains unresolved.

Look, talks are still ongoing, and constructively, and there is no fresh tension that has come up.

There has been discontent expressed about the Agnipath scheme in States such as Uttarakhand and among the youth.

There is no real reason for any apprehensions over this scheme. It is the Opposition that is creating this

Context: Recently, the Defence Minister of India reaffirmed his commitment to upholding the basic structure of the Constitution during his conversation.

Basic Structure of Doctrine

- **About:** It is a judicial principle that was established by the Supreme Court of India to safeguard the fundamental principles enshrined in the Constitution from being amended or altered in a manner that would fundamentally change its character.
- The discussion on the extent of Parliament's authority to amend the Constitution under Article 368 began as early as 1951.
- **Background**
 - **Kerala Land Reforms Amendment Act(1969):** Through this Act, the Kerala Government was empowered to acquire land owned by the Matt.
 - **Kesavananda Bharati Case 1973:** He involved a petition filed against the Government of Kerala regarding the forced acquisition of someone's land under the provisions of this Act.
 - **Fundamental Rights:** The petitioner argued that this act violated their Fundamental Rights as guaranteed in Articles 25, 26, and 31 of the Constitution of India.

- **Current status of Article 368:**
 - The Parliament under Article 368 can amend any part of the Constitution including the Fundamental Rights but without affecting the 'basic structure' of the Constitution.
 - However, the Supreme Court is yet to define or clarify as to what constitutes the 'basic structure' of the Constitution.
 - 'Basic structure' word not mention in the Constitution.

Components of Basic Structure:

- Supremacy of the Constitution
- Sovereign, democratic and republican nature of the Indian polity
- Separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary
- Judicial review
- Parliamentary system
- Rule of law
- Principle of equality
- Free and fair elections
- Independence of Judiciary
- Limited power of Parliament to amend the Constitution

Share of unspent funds under MPLAD doubled during 17th Lok Sabha

SHIVA RAJORA
New Delhi, 25 April

Members of Parliament (MPs) elected to the Lok Sabha in 2019 have not utilised funds allocated to them by the government under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme as effectively as their predecessors.

For instance, the share of unspent money under the MPLAD scheme at the end of the tenure of the current Lok Sabha nearly doubled to 16 per cent compared to 8.7 per cent in the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19). Till April 2024, ministry of statistics and programme implementation (MoSPI) data shows that out of the total amount of ₹5,185 crore available with the district authorities for spending, ₹842 crore remained unspent



ILLUSTRATION: BHASKAR BHASKAR

during the current Lok Sabha.

This exponential rise in the share of unspent money is despite the fact that the scheme remained suspended for nearly 18 months during Covid-19. And, the funds released by the government under the scheme more than halved from ₹12,945 crore in the previous Lok Sabha.

LYING UNUSED

	Total amount allocated*	Amount unspent*	*Figures in Crore
14th Lok Sabha	14,482	143	0.99
15th Lok Sabha	10,926	379	3.47
16th Lok Sabha	14,043	1,228	8.74
17th Lok Sabha	5,185	842	16.24

Source: MPLADS portal

In comparison, only 3.4 per cent (₹379 crore) of the total allocated funds (₹10,926 crore) remained unspent in the 15th Lok Sabha (2009-14). Less than 1 per cent (₹143 crore) of the allocated ₹14,482 crore was unspent in the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-09). Every year, each parliamentarian under the scheme is

allocated ₹5 crore to carry out development work in their constituency. Under the scheme, MPs can write to their district authorities recommending work they want to be carried out in their constituencies. These projects can range from sectors such as education, health, sanitation,

agriculture to construction of roads, among others. The guidelines state that the projects recommended by the MPs should have long term public utility and contribute in creation of durable community assets based on local needs.

Under the scheme, there are three types of amounts — amount released by the government, amount sanctioned by district authorities and amount spent.

The sanctioned amount by the district authorities is the amount that is used for a project. It can be more than the released amount because it also includes the interest earned on the amount released by the government and the amount carried forward from the past years. Under the scheme, the utilisation percentage can be more than 100 per cent as it is calculated as the ratio of amount spent to the amount released by

the government.

The data shows that MPs who were elected in 2019 were able to utilise 96.3 per cent of the MPLAD funds in their constituencies.

This is lower than the utilisation of MPLAD funds by MPs of the 16th Lok Sabha (99 per cent) and 15th Lok Sabha (102.7 per cent).

Among the major states and Union Territories, parliamentarians from Haryana (74 per cent) fared the worst in terms of fund utilisation. It was followed by Jammu & Kashmir (73.5 per cent), Telangana (78 per cent) and West Bengal (80 per cent). Meanwhile, parliamentarians from Andhra Pradesh (131 per cent) have the highest fund utilisation, followed by Gujarat (109 per cent), Karnataka (107.9 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (105 per cent).

MPLADS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – Polity)

Context: Recently elected Members of Parliament (MPs) to the Lok Sabha in 2019 have not efficiently utilized the funds allocated to them by the government through the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) scheme compared to their predecessors.

Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)

- **Introduction:** MPLADS was introduced by the Government of India on 23 December 1993.
 - The MPLAD Scheme is a **Central Sector Scheme** fully funded by the Government of India.
 - It allows Members of Parliament (MPs) to recommend developmental works in their constituencies, focusing on **creating durable community assets based on locally felt needs**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Objectives:** Enable MPs to suggest and execute developmental works emphasizing durable asset creation.
 - Address locally felt needs and contribute to community development.
- **Funding:**
 - Each MP receives Rs. **5 crores annually since 2011-12**, increased from Rs. 5 lakhs in 1993-94.
 - MoSPI disburses funds to district authorities, **not directly to MPs**.
 - Funds are released in **two installments, Rs. 2.5 crore each**, and are **non-lapsable**.
 - MPs allocate at **least 15% and 7.5% of funds for SCs and STs**, respectively.

Hidden 'biosphere' of extreme microbes discovered 13 feet below Atacama Desert is deepest found there to date



Context: Researchers recently made the groundbreaking discovery of thriving microbes 13 feet beneath the scorched surface of Chile's Atacama Desert, marking the deepest exploration of microbial life in the region so far.

Atacama Desert

- **Location:** Northern Chile: Nestled between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean.
- **Borders:** Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia.
- **Volcanoes:** Hosts 12 volcanoes, mainly located in the western outliers of the Andes.
- **Driest Desert:** The Atacama Desert is the driest nonpolar desert in the world, as well as the only true desert to receive less precipitation than the polar deserts.
- **Resources and Utilization:**
 - **Sodium Nitrate:** Largest natural supply, used for various purposes including fertilizer and explosives.
 - **Soil Similarity to Mars:** Soil samples resemble those from Mars, leading NASA to use the desert for testing instruments for missions to the red planet.

Why is the Atacama Desert so dry?

- **Geographic Location:** The first reason is that the desert sits on the wrong side of the Andes with regards to prevailing winds.
- **Atmospheric Conditions:** The second reason is high air pressure.
- **Influence of Ocean Currents:** The last reason is the cold Humboldt Current from the Pacific Ocean.

SC declines petition to end Collegium, revive NJAC

The plea, filed by advocate Mathews Nedumpara, says the present system leads to nepotism; SC Registrar says the issue is settled, and repeat litigation is a 'waste of judicial time and energy'

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Registry has refused to accept a petition to end the Collegium system of judicial appointments and revive the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), seeking to "prevent needless waste of judicial time and energy".

In a six-page order, Supreme Court Registrar Puneet Sehgal said that the Collegium system had already been upheld, while the NJAC – which gave an equal role to the government in judicial appointments – had been struck down by a Constitution Bench in October 2015. A review plea against the judgment was also subsequently dismissed by the court in 2018.

The petition filed by ad-



It is critical to ensure litigants do not overburden courts with matters which already stand adjudicated

PUNEET SEHGAL
Supreme Court Registrar

vocate Mathews Nedumpara only "replicated" issues which have already been put to rest, Mr. Sehgal said. "It is critical to ensure litigants do not overburden courts with matters which already stand adjudicated," he observed in the order dated April 24.

Ulterior motive

A repeat litigation was not in the public's best interest, the order said, adding that the petition by Mr. Nedumpara was either an attempt to overreach the

principles of settled law or fuelled by an "ulterior motive".

The Registrar invoked the Supreme Court Rules, 2013 in his order against the petition.

"I hold that the registration of the present case was not proper and by virtue of Order XV Rule 5 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, I hereby decline to receive the same," the order declared.

Under this provision of the 2013 Rules, the Registrar may refuse to receive a petition on the ground that

it discloses no reasonable cause or is frivolous or contains scandalous matter. The petitioner has 15 days to appeal to the court.

'Synonym for nepotism'
The petition was filed in 2023 amid verbal attacks against the Collegium system by the then Law Minister Kiren Rijji.

The plea argues that the Supreme Court, through its Constitution Bench judgment of October 2015, had thwarted the "will of the people" by striking down the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act which had introduced the NJAC mechanism.

The petition says that the 2015 judgment should have rendered void *ab initio* as it had revived the Collegium system, which the petitioners called a "synonym for nepotism and favouritism".

Context: The Supreme Court Registry has refused to accept a petition to end the Collegium system of judicial appointments and revive the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC), seeking to "prevent needless waste of judicial time and energy".

National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)

- **About:** NJAC is a group in charge of selecting and moving judges in the higher courts of India.
- **Established By:** 99th Constitutional Amendment Act, of 2014.
- **Objective:** The NJAC was meant to take the place of the collegium system used to choose judges.
- **Composition:** 6 persons Chief Justice of India (Chairperson), Two other senior judges of the Supreme Court, The Union Minister of Law and Justice, Two eminent persons: nominated by a committee & Leader of Opposition of LS.
 - In October 2015, the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench, with a majority of 4:1, ruled that the NJAC was against the Constitution and supported the continued use of the collegium system.

Collegium System

- **About:** In this system, **decisions about choosing judges or promoting lawyers** to the Supreme Court and moving judges between High Courts and the Supreme Court are made by a group consisting of the Chief Justice of India and the four most experienced judges of the SC.
- The way **judges are chosen and moved around is based on decisions** made by the SC, not on a law from Parliament or a part of the Constitution.
- The **term 'Collegium' isn't mentioned in the Indian Constitution**. It has become a practice based on legal judgments.

Constitutional Provisions on Judge Appointments

- **Articles 124(2) and 217:** These articles specifically address the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts respectively.
- **Presidential Authority:** The President holds the authority for these appointments as per the Constitution.
- **Consultations Requirement:** The President is mandated to consult with judges from both the Supreme Court and High Courts regarding appointments.

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