



Contact: 097418 69722

17 September 2018**Daily News Pedia****CIC wants break-up of how MPLADS funds are utilised**

CIC (Central Information Commissioner) recommends legal framework to ensure MP's accountability for utilization of MPLADS (Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) fund.

MPLADS: Each MP is given Rs 5 crore annually to be spent on projects of choice in his or her constituency. The scheme is funded and administered through Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). However, there are no details of how these funds are used. Projects are recommended and implemented by district level administration under MPLADS scheme. CIC order came in the wake of report by MoSPI that Rs 12,000 crore funds of MPLADS have remained unspent.

CIC recommendations: The offices of the Lok Sabha (LS) Speaker and the Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairman to make "legal framework" to ensure transparency under MPLADS.

Every MP will have to submit a comprehensive report on MPLADS works after completion of his/her term to the Chairman of RS or the Speaker of LS. District administrations must provide regular information — work-wise, MP-wise, and year-wise details on progress — which are to be compiled by the MoSPI and made available to the public. The provisions for the secretarial staff of Parliament and the National Informatics Centre to aid and assist parliamentary parties in meeting transparency obligation. The ministry to make necessary changes to publish MP-wise, constituency-wise and work-wise details to ensure its voluntary disclosure under Section 4 of the RTI Act. Liabilities for any breach of duties should also be imposed, said the order. Further, the framework should prohibit and prevent MPs using the funds for their private works, or diverting them to private trusts or to their own relatives.

Source: The Hindu.

Kudumbashree

Brinda Karat member of Rajya Sabha, from CPI (Marxist), talks about working and importance of Kudumbashree during recent Kerala floods

Kudumbashree is the women empowerment and poverty eradication program, framed and enforced by the State Poverty Eradication Mission (SPEM) by the Government of Kerala in 1998. First tier is made up of neighbourhood group (NG) and they are directly elected. Second tier is made up of Area Development Societies (ADS) which are elected at the level of NG. Third tier comprises of community development society (CDS) which are elected at the level of ADS.

Majority of the members are women belonging to below poverty line. Reservation has been given to Dalit and Adivasis women.

Activities performed by Kudumbashree: Organic farming of vegetables, Activities related to Poultry and dairy, Catering and tailoring to its members, Training courses in women's rights, knowledge of constitution, Training in skills to set up micro enterprise, Training in banking practices.

Relief work done by Kudumbashree during Kerala floods: In total 4 lakh women volunteer participated in Kerala relief flood. Members of the organization donated around 7.4 crore in Chief Minister Relief fund. They cleaned 11,300 public places which include school, hospital, Panchayat building, and anganwadi Centre. Cleaned 200,000 houses filled with filth. Gave counselling to 40,000 people affected with flood. 38,000 members opened their own homes for shelter for flood affected people.

Source: The Hindu.

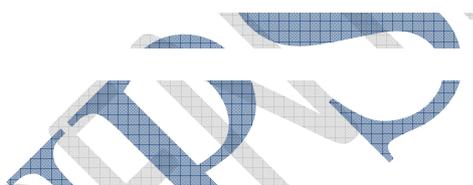
U.P. to launch first-ever dial-FIR

The Uttar Pradesh Police are set to launch a first of its kind dial-FIR scheme in the country.

The aim is to enhance the strength of the ATS both qualitatively and quantitatively.

In this scheme, a common man can register regular crimes without going to a police station. The scheme will also prepare an online photographic dossier of criminals that will be provided to policemen on 22,000 new i-pads.

Besides this, the UP Police are also expanding the counter-terror combat and response grid in the State by training over 100 fresh commandos in special skills including a maiden batch of women personnel.



Source: The Hindu.

More river stretches are now critically polluted: CPCB

According to an assessment by the CPCB, the number of polluted stretches in India's rivers has increased.

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is a statutory organization established in 1974 under the Ministry of Environment and Forest.

Biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) is the amount of dissolved oxygen used by microorganisms in the biological process: The greater the BOD, the lower is the amount of dissolved oxygen available for marine animals. It is a reliable gauge to measure organic pollution in water bodies.

CPCB has a programme of measuring the quality of rivers based on BOD since 1990s. The health of a river and efficiency of the water treatment are classified based on BOD.

The greater the BOD the higher is the priority level. BOD greater than or equal to 30 mg/l is categorized as Priority 1. BOD between 3.1- 6 mg/l is termed as Priority 5.

The CPCB considers a BOD less than 3 mg/l an indicator of a healthy water body.

Findings of the Assessment: The number of polluted stretches in India's rivers has increased to 351 from 302 in 2015. The number of critically polluted stretches where water quality indicators are the poorest has also gone up to 45 from 34. Although the focus is mainly on Ganga and the states through which it flows, it has been found that many rivers in Maharashtra, Assam and Gujarat are far more polluted.

Some of significant stretches of pollution includes the - Mithi River between Powai and Dharavi, BOD level of 250 mg /l. Godavari from Someshwar to Rahed, BOD level of 5.0-80 mg /l.

Sabarmati between Kheroj to Vautha, BOD level of 4.0-147 mg/l. Hindon between Saharanpur to Ghaziabad, BOD level of 48-120 mg/l.

Source: The Hindu.

Masala bonds: What are they, how government plans to check rupee fall through them

Government removed the cap of 5% of withholding tax (Tax on income imposed at source, i.e. a third party is charged with the task of deducting the tax from certain kinds of payments and remitting that amount to the government) from masala bond from financial year 2019

Masala bonds are bonds issued outside India but denominated in Indian Rupees, rather than the local currency.

Importance of masala bond: Masala bonds help to internationalize the Indian rupee and also strengthen the Indian financial system. By issuing bonds in rupees, an Indian entity is shielded against the risk of currency fluctuation, typically associated with borrowing in foreign currency. The bonds are directly pegged to the Indian currency. So, investors (foreign investor who buys the bond) will directly take the currency risk or exchange rate risks. If the value of Indian currency falls, the foreign investor will have to bear the losses, not the issuer which is an Indian entity or a corporate. Besides helping diversify funding sources, the cost of borrowing could also turn out to be lower than domestic markets.

Objective of the move: The move will make masala bond more attractive to foreign investor. Inflow of credit from masala bond will help to check slide of rupee. It will also help in reducing current account deficit.

Source: The Hindu.

EDITORIAL

To read

Iran on the edge



US sanctions have pushed the country's economy to the brink.

The presidents of Turkey, Russia and Iran came together for a key summit in Tehran on September 7. The situation in Syria, of course, dominated the meeting of President Hassan Rouhani with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President Vladimir Putin. The summit discussed at length the tragic situation in the town of Idlib, dominated by an array of jihadist organisations and home to nearly 1.5 million civilians displaced from other parts of Syria. However, it also covered all issues pertinent to closer economic cooperation between the three nations to ward off the impact of the unilateral sanctions imposed on Iran by the US.

Turkey and Iran promised to take concrete steps regarding the use of national currencies in bilateral trade. This does not come as a surprise, since in the past few weeks, in the face of pressures on their currencies, Turkey, Iran and Russia have started seeking ways to give up the dollar and trade in national currencies. This is, of course, a crucial topic for the Iranian

government, maybe even more important than Assad's offensive against Idlib. Let us not forget that the Iranian rial has devalued by 90 per cent against the dollar in just 10 years. In early September, the rial hit a record low of 1,40,000 to the dollar. Washington imposed the first set of economic sanctions on Iran last month and is scheduled to impose tougher sanctions on November 4, the day militant students stormed the US embassy in 1979 and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

Meanwhile, Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation has promised to increase uranium enrichment beyond previous levels if the American sanctions continue and Iran is unable to sell its oil. The sanctions imposed by the Trump Administration since August are against the will of China, Russia and the European signatories to Iran Nuclear Deal. Nonetheless, major European companies, such as Total and Daimler, have cut commercial ties with Tehran, fearing Trump's threats. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, recently invited the Iranian government to give up any partnership with the Europeans. "If it does not serve our national interests, we can abandon the nuclear deal," he said.

Iranian authorities are not willing to engage in any negotiations with the Trump administration, despite his offer of unconditional talks with Tehran. They have appealed to the International Court of Justice against Trump's decision to re-impose the sanctions. The Court could, however, take several months to even deliver a provisional verdict.

Meanwhile, the financial and economic pressures on Tehran are beginning to have an effect on the country. There have been reports of a lack of hard currency at Iran's exchange bureaus. A recent report by Iran's Parliamentary Research Center estimated that the capital flight in the year leading up to March 20 amounted to \$13 billion. All this has made Iran vulnerable to manipulation by its neighbours. The latest example is the recent regional deal on the Caspian Sea, which has left Iran a loser. Totally isolated and with very few options, Iran recently approached Pakistan. While US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was talking with his Indian counterpart about India's relations with Iran, Iran's foreign minister Javad Zarif was in Islamabad. He is hopeful that the new Pakistani leadership will revitalise the Iran-to-Pakistan gas pipeline project and ease Tehran's financial difficulties. However, it goes without saying that Pakistan does not favour the development of Iran's Chabahar port, because it sees it as a rival to Gwadar, which China is developing. China sees Pakistan as a strategic partner while it considers Iran as a mere export market.

One way or another, it looks like cracks are starting to appear in Iran's domestic and foreign policies. The differing views of the representatives of Iran's conservative and religious establishment could have a fundamental impact on the political future of the country and the survival of the Iranian regime.

MAINS QUESTION

Q: Why China cannot replace India vis-à-vis Nepal?