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NATIONAL

SC SCRAPS NOTA OPTION FOR RS POLLS

Recently, the Supreme Court scrapped the use of NOTA for Rajya Sabha polls.

The three judge Bench was led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra.

The court was hearing a batch of petitions to ban persons charged with heinous criminal charges from contesting elections.

The apex court has given the following arguments for the same:

The option NOTA is meant only for universal adult suffrage and direct elections.

It is not for elections held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.

In the voting of upper house elections, there is a whip and elector is bound to obey the command of the party.

Arguments against NOTA:

The Supreme Court criticized the Election Commission for introducing NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections.

The court said the Election Commission could not act against the court's judgment on a PUCL plea, which introduced the idea of NOTA.

NOTA harm an electoral process where open ballot is permissible and party discipline reigns.

NOTA will destroy the concept of value of a vote and representation and encourage defection that shall open the doors for corruption which is a malignant disorder.

The Petitioner had argued that the Election Commission cannot sanction the use of NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections by way of mere circular, which have the effect of overriding the provisions of Article 80(4).

NOTA in an indirect election would not only run counter to the discipline expected from an elector under the Tenth Schedule but also be "counterproductive to the basic grammar of the law of disqualification... on the ground of defection."

<p>Where it counts NOTA: It allows voters to register their protest if none of the candidates are acceptable to them</p> <p>IN DIRECT ELECTIONS NOTA has only symbolic value in a direct election Regardless of NOTA numbers, candidate polling most votes is elected</p>		<p>IN RAJYA SABHA POLLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this indirect poll, legislators elect candidates to the Upper House • Single transferable vote involves marking order of preference among candidates • NOTA will alter outcome, as candidates need a particular number of votes to be elected. If first preference is for NOTA, the vote becomes invalid
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SC PLAN TO CLEAN UP POLITICS

Recently, the Supreme Court proposed to make political parties accountable for criminalizing politics.

The Bench was headed by the Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra.

The court was hearing a batch of petitions to ban persons charged with heinous criminal charges from contesting elections.

To make political parties accountable for criminalizing politics, the court suggested that:

It could direct the Election Commission to insist that parties get new members to declare in an affidavit their criminal antecedents and publish them so that the "entire country knows how many criminals there are in a party.

The EC could de-register a party or withdraw its symbol if it refused to comply.

The suggestion was made by the Bench in a bid to prevent criminals from entering politics.

The suggestion from the Bench faced stiff opposition from the government.

The Bench based its proposal on the power of the Election Commission to conduct an election and register/de-register political

parties under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act of 1951, respectively.

The court invoked The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order of 1968.

The Bench pointed to how Section 29A requires a party to swear to uphold the principles of socialism, secularism, democracy, sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.

CENTRE MOOTS OVERSEAS UDAN

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has prepared a draft scheme document for “UDAN International”.

Benefits of the scheme:

Scheme will enable States to choose routes, provide subsidy to airlines.

State governments will be able to encourage tourism on preferred international air routes by offering subsidy to domestic airlines for a period of three years.

The scheme is designed for State governments to promote air connectivity on international routes.

The State will indentify international routes for which the Airports Authority of India (AAI) will determine a subsidy amount per seat and invite bids from domestic carriers.

The government will grant financial aid only for the actual number of passengers seat that are unsold, even if the airline had sought subsidy for a higher percentage of seating capacity at the time of bidding.

An airline that is awarded a particular route will have exclusive rights to a subsidy on that route for a period of three years.

The key difference between this scheme and the regional connectivity scheme (RCS) for domestic routes is that there is no capping of fares.

The RCS, makes air travel affordable, that is why the scheme was called UdeDesh Ka AamNagrik (UDAN).

The financial assistance to an airline will be offered from the International Air Connectivity Fund (IACF), which will be created through the contributions made by the State government.

Airlines will have to conduct a minimum of three and a maximum of seven departures on a given route on three days in a week.

The Centre has allowed airlines to enter into a code-sharing arrangement with international and domestic airlines for UDAN international.

At present, the low-cost carrier AirAsia operates daily flights to Kuala Lumpur from Bhubaneswar with a subsidy from the State government on a per-flight basis.

CENTRE RULES OUT TOTAL BAN ON FIRECRACKERS

Recently, the Centre ruled out a national ban on firecrackers

The apex court was hearing applications seeking a complete nationwide ban on the use, manufacture, licensing, sale, resale, or distribution of firecrackers in bid to combat pollution.

The Centre suggests alternative steps to curb pollution such as:

- Production of green crackers.
- Crackers could even be burst in areas pre-designated by the State governments.

The Centre also suggested working together with institutions such as:

- The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, National Environment Engineering Research Institute, Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation(PESO), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).
- Setting up of Raw Material Characterization Facilities to check the presence of high contents of unburned material, partially combusted material or poor quality of raw material in gun powder in firecracker.
- Use of “reduced emission firecrackers or improved firecrackers”.

These are “low emission sound and light emitting functional crackers with PM reduction by 30-35%.

It helps in significant reduction in nitrogen oxide and Sulphur dioxide due to in-situ water generation as dust suppressant and usage of low cost oxidants.

PESO could be approached to ensure that fireworks with permitted chemicals and decibel levels are used.

PESO could run tests for banned ones like lithium, arsenic, antimony, lead, mercury.

CPCB and respective state pollution control boards shall carry out short-term monitoring in their cities from regulatory parameters against short term ambient air quality proposed by CPCB with regard to bursting of firecracker.

The Tamil Nadu government gave its arguments in favour of restrained use of firecrackers but not a blanket ban by submitting that whatever human beings do contributes to environmental pollution.

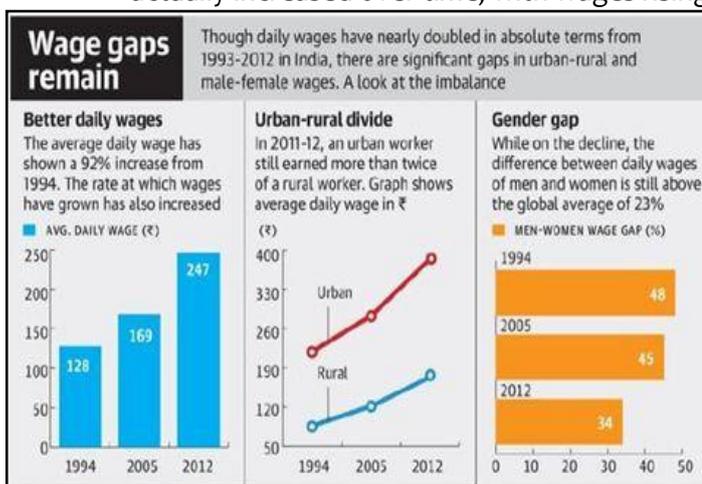
compensation, as opposed to capital or landowners — has declined.

The rise in average wages was more rapid in rural areas, and for casual workers.

The average wage of casual workers — who make 62% of the earning population — was only Rs.143 a day.

Daily wages in urban areas (Rs.384) also remain more than twice as high as those in rural areas (Rs.175).

Regional disparities in average wages have actually increased over time, with wages rising



ILO REPORT FLAGS WAGE INEQUALITY IN INDIA

According to the International Labour Organization, real average daily wages in India almost doubled in the first two decades after economic reforms, but low pay and wage inequality remains a major concern.

Key highlights of the International Labour Organization:

In 2009-10, a third of all of wage workers were paid less than the national minimum wage. That includes 41% of all casual workers and 15% of salaried workers.

In 2011-12, the average wage in India was about Rs.247 rupees a day, almost double the 1993-94 figure.

However, average labour productivity (as measured by GDP per worker) increased more rapidly than real average wages.

India’s labour share — or the proportion of national income which goes into labour

more rapidly in high-wage States than in low-wage ones.

The gender wage gap decreased from 48% in 1993-94 to 34% in 2011-12, but still remains high by international standards.

For all worker groups, the average wages of casual rural female workers was the lowest, at just Rs.104 a day.

State-specific and comparative studies on wages are needed, said the ILO, urging collaborative work between government agencies, academic institutions and expert organisations

Suggestions:

- Stronger implementation of minimum wage laws.
- Strengthening of the framework for collective bargaining by workers.
- This is essential to combat persistent low pay in some sectors and to bridge the wage gaps between rural and urban, male

and female, and regular and casual workers.

- State-specific and comparative studies on wages are needed.

KERALA FLOOD LESSON FOR ASSAM: EXPERTS

‘Flood-experienced’ Assam can learn a lesson from the Kerala deluge to avoid large-scale disaster, say water resources and ecology experts in the Northeast.

The most worrying similarity is a network of dams in the “control of other States” surrounding Kerala and Assam.

Assam is having Kerala-like floods albeit on a smaller scale because of hydropower projects in neighbouring States and in adjoining Bhutan.

A majority of dams that affected Kerala are on inter-State rivers and under the control of neighbouring States such as Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The decision of how much water and when to be released is not within the purview of Kerala, which is suffering from downstream impact of those dams and the situation is similar for Assam.

More dams coming up in other northeastern States and in Bhutan could spell doom for Assam.

Assam has been rain-deficient by 30% this year, but Golaghat district experienced flash flood due to the release of excess water by the Doyang dam in Nagaland.

Arunachal Pradesh too is wary of the impact of big dams. “The river Siang has suffered from dams and other constructions in China upstream.

Kerala is reaping the consequences of neglecting, like other Western Ghats States, the recommendations of the Gadgil and Kasturirangan panels against hydro-power projects in ecologically sensitive zones.

According to Experts, micro-climate controlled by land use was the primary reason behind the catastrophe in Kerala though Climate Change was the overriding factor.

Rainfall in Kerala has been increasing after a dip in 2013, but the annual rainfall in many parts of the northeast is much higher than the southern coastal State.

The densely populated floodplains of Assam thus have to worry because of changes in land use that have impacted the micro-climate adversely.

The lesson that Assam needs to learn from Kerala is the effect of rampant deforestation, mining, and quarrying.

Kerala has allowed settlement on elephant corridor such as Thirunelli-Kadarakote and Kottiyoor-Periya, leading to felling.

STATE SEEKS CESS ON SGST, INCREASED BORROWING LIMIT

The Kerala government is looking forward to imposition of a 10% cess on State GST and rise in its borrowing limit from the present 3% to 4.5% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP).

The purpose is to raise sufficient resources for the post-floods reconstruction challenges that Kerala faces.

The State would also launch a special lottery scheme to raise funds for the reconstruction challenges.

The State government would request the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to implement long-term schemes for reconstruction of rain-battered infrastructure and revival of the agriculture and irrigation projects.

The Centre would also be urged to create a special Rs. 2,600-crore package under MGNREGS.

The State wished to submit before the Union a comprehensive rehabilitation proposal.

A moratorium on repayment of loans in the flood-hit areas was already in place and this was applicable to both commercial banks and cooperative banks.

The State also seeks to rise its borrowing limit to raise funds for post-floods reconstruction.
