

## FOR BETTER USE: ON MPLADS FUNDS

### While Taking Over MPLADS Funds to Fight the Virus, Centre Must Allocate Judiciously

The suspension of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) for two years to boost the funding available for the COVID-19 fight is a step in the right direction. It may appear at first blush that the decision may undermine the decentralized manner of funding local area development. However, past experience has been that some members do not utilize their full entitlement and that there is a gap between recommendation made by members and implementation by the administration under this scheme. The immediate benefit now is the freeing up of about ₹7,900 crore over a two-year period so that it can be spent on boosting the health infrastructure needed to combat the pandemic. This is the second announcement regarding MPLADS that the Centre has made after the disease outbreak. Last month, it allowed utilization of MPLADS funds to the extent of at least ₹5lakh by each MP to purchase medical equipment for government hospitals in their constituencies. Many members made immediate use of the one-time dispensation to recommend the procurement of N95 masks, personal protective equipment, and ventilators. Now that the entire scheme has been suspended, the government should ensure that recommendations already made are acted upon immediately. While the transfer of these sums to the Consolidated Fund of India would help judicious deployment anywhere in the country, based on an assessment of the varying needs in different regions, it would redound to the government's credit if the genuine efforts made by members to help their constituents are not frustrated. It should also see to it that allocations are non-discriminatory.

Political reactions indicate that there is considerable disenchantment over the suspension — the ₹5-crore corpus available to each member is a source of much goodwill for elected representatives. Better performing MPs identify and fulfil local development needs with empathy and alacrity. However, there has also been persistent criticism about the scheme's very nature. A conceptual flaw pointed out by experts is that it goes against the separation of powers. It allows individual legislators to encroach on the planning and implementation duties of the administration. Jurists have pointed out that the Constitution does not confer the power to spend public money on an individual legislator. Experts have called it out for weak monitoring. The Supreme Court, while declining to strike down the scheme, called for a robust accountability regime. MPLADS gives scope for MPs to utilize the funds as a source of patronage that they can dispense at will. The CAG has flagged instances of financial mismanagement and inflation of amounts spent. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission recommended its abrogation altogether, highlighting the problems of the legislator stepping into the shoes of the executive. The current suspension gives some scope for a reconsideration of the scheme in its totality.

### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** it was introduced by Government of India in December 1993. The objective is to enable the Members of Parliament (MP) to suggest and get executed developmental works of capital nature based on locally felt needs with emphasis on creation of durable assets.
2. **take over** (phrasal verb) – assume control of, take charge of, take command of; acquire, gain, appropriate.
3. **judiciously** (adverb) - wisely, sensibly, prudently, thoughtfully, well-advised.
4. **suspension** (noun) – (temporary) removal, elimination, rejection.
5. **at first blush** (phrase) – at the first glimpse (glance, brief look, sight).
6. **undermine** (verb) – reduce, diminish, impede, hinder.
7. **decentralised** (adjective) – relating to transfer of the power/control of a department/ government from a single place to other locations.
8. **entitlement** (noun) – allowance, allocation, allotment, quota/grant.
9. **combat** (verb) – fight, tackle, confront, defy/resist.

10. **pandemic** (noun) - the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
11. **outbreak** (noun) – sudden appearance/occurrence (of a disease); outburst, epidemic.
12. **utilisation** (noun) – an effective use of something.
13. **dispensation** (noun) – arrangement, order, scheme/plan.
14. **procurement** (noun) – collection, acquiring, purchasing.
15. **personal protective equipment** (PPE) (noun) – safety gear; protective clothing, helmets, masks or other garments or equipment designed to protect the wearer’s body from injury/disease.
16. **ventilator** (noun) – a respirator, a device (used for a patient to breathe).
17. **act upon** (verb) - follow, comply with, act in accordance with.
18. **sum** (noun) - a particular amount of money.
19. **Consolidated Fund of India** (noun) - All revenues received by the Government by way of taxes like Income Tax, Central Excise, Customs and other receipts flowing to the Government in connection with the conduct of Government business i.e. Non-Tax Revenues are credited into the Consolidated Fund constituted under Article 266 (1) of the Constitution of India. Similarly, all loans raised by the Government by issue of Public notifications, treasury bills (internal debt) and loans obtained from foreign governments and international institutions (external debt) are credited into this fund. All expenditure of the government is incurred from this fund and no amount can be withdrawn from the Fund without authorization from the Parliament.
20. **judicious** (adjective) - wise, sensible, prudent, thoughtful, welladvised.
21. **deployment** (noun) – the bringing of resources into effective action.
22. **redound** (verb) – contribute to, result in, lead to, effect.
23. **credit** (noun) – praise, commendation, acclaim, acknowledgement.
24. **redound to one's credit** (phrase) - used to say that someone deserves praise for having done something.
25. **constituents** (noun) – all people (members/voters) of a constituency.
26. **non-discriminatory** (adjective) – fair, judicial, unbiased.
27. **considerable** (adjective) – significant, substantial, a lot of.
28. **disenchantment** (noun) – disappointment, dissatisfaction, discontent.
29. **corpus** (noun) – (in finance) total amount of money.
30. **goodwill** (noun) – an intangible asset (brand name, reputation & etc).
31. **empathy** (noun) – compassion, sympathy, feeling.
32. **alacrity** (noun) – readiness, eagerness, willingness.
33. **persistent** (adjective) – continuous, unrelenting, never-ending.
34. **conceptual** (adjective) - theoretical, notional, speculative.
35. **flaw** (noun) – defect, fault, imperfection/weakness.
36. **point out** (phrasal verb) – identify, recognize, draw attention to, mention.
37. **go against** (phrasal verb) – oppose, be contrary to.
38. **encroach on** (verb) – influence, have an effect on, impose oneself.
39. **jurist** (noun) - an expert in law.
40. **confer** (verb) – grant, bestow, present/give.
41. **call out** (phrasal verb) – to speak/say loudly, criticize, draw attention to (someone’s bad actions).
42. **strike down** (phrasal verb) – abolish, annul, nullify (a law or regulation).
43. **robust** (adjective) – strong, powerful.
44. **accountability** (noun) – responsibility, liability, answerability.
45. **patronage** (noun) – support, backing, protection.
46. **dispense** (verb) – distribute, allocate, give/provide.
47. **at will** (phrase) – as one wishes, at one’s pleasure, at one’s discretion.
48. **flag** (verb) – indicate, identify, point out.
49. **inflation** (noun) – simply meaning “cost of living”; increase of price level of goods & services and vice versa decrease of currency value.

50. **abrogation** (noun) – abolition, repeal, cancellation (of a law/agreement).
51. **highlight** (verb) – focus on, underscore, call attention to.
52. **step into someone's shoes** (phrase) – take control of a task/job from another person.
53. **the executive** (noun) – the executive is a branch of government which enforces the law as written by the legislature and interpreted by the judiciary.
54. **totality** (noun) – entirety, wholeness, fullness.

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### PROLONGED INJUSTICE: ON MEHBOOBA MUFTI'S DETENTION

#### Mehbooba Mufti's Continued Detention In J&K Is Hard To Defend Morally And Politically

It has been eight months since the Centre revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir and downgraded and divided it into two Union Territories in August 2019. Several political leaders imprisoned in the wake of the abrupt decision continue to be in detention even now, the most prominent among them being the former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti. Two other former CMs — Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah — were released last month. Freedom for Ms. Mufti is still not near, the administration indicated on Tuesday as it shifted her from a guesthouse-turned-jail to her official residence that has been designated as a subsidiary jail. She will not be allowed to move out of here or receive visitors, and remains in detention under the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA). Hundreds of others including veteran Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Naeem Akhtar and IAS-officer-turned politician Shah Faesal continue to languish in jail. The manner in which the Centre hollowed out Article 370 and dismantled a State set an inglorious precedent in the history of Indian federalism. The lockdown of J&K was mostly lifted, before it was reimposed to combat COVID-19. Meanwhile, the constitutionality of the revocation of the special status and accompanying restrictions on the entire population of a region remains unsettled before the Supreme Court, eight months on.

Ms. Mufti's home imprisonment, at a time when the entire population is expected to lock themselves up in their own homes, is the theatre of the absurd. Her continuing incarceration even after two other former CMs have been freed is inexplicable. What is it that makes her an exceptional suspect under the PSA? The change in the status of J&K and the massive deployment of force to deal with its aftermath were spectacles of a new national resolve, according to the supporters of those decisions. The unfolding tragedy of the pandemic bespeaks the pitfalls of lopsided priorities, by laying bare the country's inadequate health-care infrastructure. J&K is badly hit by the disease, with a fightback restricted by the absence of an elected government. The havoc by the virus should not be used as a facade to trample upon civil rights or to criminalize expression of opinion. If anything, this unprecedented crisis should spur fresh thinking on finding solutions to intractable political problems. The BJP's view on Kashmir is as old the party itself. But that by itself is no reason to avoid revisiting the issue. The very least it can do, however, is to immediately free Ms. Mufti. That will be a good signal to the people of J&K during these tough times.

#### Meanings of Difficult Words:

1. **prolonged** (adjective) – lengthy, extended, protracted, unending, unrelenting.
2. **injustice** (noun) - lack of justice, unfairness, misdeed, unjust/unfair act.
3. **detention** (noun) – imprisonment, confinement/incarceration, captivity, custody.
4. **revoke** (verb) – cancel, repeal/reverse, abrogate, nullify.
5. **downgrade** (verb) – lower in status, reduce in rank, demote.
6. **imprison** (verb) - incarcerate, take into custody, detain/confine, jail, put in prison, hold captive.
7. **in the wake of** (phrase) - as a result of, in the aftermath of, as a consequence of.
8. **abrupt** (adjective) - sudden, immediate, unexpected.
9. **designate** (verb) – identify, recognize, classify.

10. **subsidiary** (adjective) – sub (jail); subordinate, secondary.
11. **veteran** (noun) – (long-serving) expert, mature established/experienced person in an area of activity.
12. **languish** (verb) – suffer, be abandoned, be neglected, be forgotten.
13. **hollow out** (verb) – remove, undermine, weaken, erode.
14. **dismantle** (verb) – demolish, knock down, destroy.
15. **inglorious** (adjective) – shameful, dishonourable/discreditable, disgraceful, humiliating, shocking.
16. **precedent** (noun) – (previous) example/instance, model, pattern, (prior) instance.
17. **federalism/federal framework/system** (noun) – a system of government in which establishments such as states or provinces share power with a national government.
18. **lockdown** (noun) – an emergency protocol implemented by the authorities that prevents people from leaving from a place; An extended state of confinement/encirclement/isolation of a person by the authority.
19. **combat** (verb) – fight, tackle, confront, defy/resist.
20. **meanwhile** (adverb) – for now, for the present, meantime.
21. **constitutionality** (noun) – the condition of acting in accordance with an applicable constitution.
22. **revocation** (noun) – cancellation, abandonment, calling off/recall.
23. **accompanying** (adjective) – occurring, happening, taking place (at the same time).
24. **lock (oneself) up** (phrasal verb) - confine; secure, protect oneself (by staying inside one's own home/room).
25. **the Theatre of the Absurd** (phrase) - a form of drama that focuses largely on the idea of existentialism (a theory that emphasizes the existence of the individual person) and expresses what happens when human existence has no meaning or purpose and therefore all communication breaks down. The term 'Theatre of the Absurd' is applied to a number of dramatic works which share the view that the human condition is essentially absurd (meaningless/pointless) by which is meant a lack of meaning in life. It highlighted the meaninglessness and irrationality of human existence.
26. **inexplicable** (adjective) – unexplainable, incomprehensible, unfathomable.
27. **exceptional** (adjective) – unusual, rare, abnormal; special, extraordinary.
28. **deployment** (noun) – the movement of workforce to a place for an effective action.
29. **aftermath** (noun) – consequence, result/outcome, repercussion.
30. **spectacle** (noun) – display, show, performance, presentation.
31. **resolve** (noun) - determination, resolution, firmness of purpose.
32. **unfold** (verb) – occur, happen, take place.
33. **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
34. **bespeak** (verb) – indicate, signify, denote/point to.
35. **pitfall** (noun) – danger, risk, problem.
36. **lopsided** (adjective) – uneven, unsymmetrical, one-sided.
37. **lay bare** (phrasal verb) – reveal, expose, disclose.
38. **havoc** (noun) - disorder, chaos, destruction.
39. **facade** (noun) – outward appearance, false display, pretence.
40. **trample upon** (verb) – disregard, show no consideration for, treat disrespectfully, treat with contempt.
41. **criminalise** (verb) – make something (an activity) illegal.
42. **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
43. **spur** (verb) – stimulate, encourage, motivate.
44. **intractable** (adjective) – unmanageable, uncontrollable, ungovernable.

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