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SEDITION LAW

SOURCE: [THE HINDU](#)

WHY IN NEW?

- The Supreme Court made a significant decision by directing a five-judge constitutional bench to review the legality of Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which deals with sedition charges.
- This decision comes after the Supreme Court suspended the application of the sedition law in May 2022 while a related case was under consideration.
- Following this suspension, the Government of India introduced a bill known as the "Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023," aimed at replacing the IPC.

SEDITION LAW

- Section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code addresses the offense of sedition, which is defined as a crime against the state.
- This law specifically targets content that could potentially provoke violence or disrupt public order by fostering hatred, contempt, or disaffection toward the government.
- It's important to note that when criticism is employed to challenge and influence government decisions at the legislative or administrative level, it does not fall within the scope of seditious activity.

WHAT THE APEX COURT SAID

This government has been scrapping many obsolete laws. We don't know why they are not looking into this law? Continuance of this law is a serious threat to liberty

- The enormous power of misuse of this section can be compared with a carpenter with a saw. Instead of cutting a tree, he cuts the entire forest

- There is no dispute that it is a colonial law and was used by the British to suppress freedom and was used against Mahatma Gandhi... Is this law still needed after 75 years of Independence?

WHAT IS SECTION 124(A)?

Under Section 124A of IPC, the offence of sedition is committed when any person by words or otherwise brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the govt established by law

- The penal provision is punishable with a jail term ranging between three years to life term

LOW CONVICTION RATE

- Between 2016 and 2019, the number of sedition cases rose by 160% to 93
- But in 2019, the conviction rate was 3.3%

HISTORY OF SEDITION LAW IN INDIA

- **COLONIAL ROOTS:**
 - Sedition was not initially considered a criminal offense in the original 1860 version of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), authored by Thomas Macaulay in 1837.
 - The inclusion of sedition as a criminal offense in the IPC took place later, specifically in the 1870 modification led by Sir James Stephen.
 - This addition to the IPC was introduced during the period of British rule in India and was categorized under the term "Exciting Disaffection."
- **PROVISIONS FOR SEDITION FOUND IN OTHER LEGISLATION IN INDIA:**
 - **SEDITION MEETING ACT 1911:** The District Magistrate or Commissioner of Police, with public notice, can prohibit gatherings promoting sedition, disaffection, or disturbance in a specified area.

- **UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES PREVENTION ACT 1967:** The Act grants the central government unrestricted authority to designate an activity as illegal through an Official Gazette notification.

RELEVANCE OF SEDITION LAW

- **Maintain sovereignty and integrity of the nation:**
 - The sedition law is instrumental in protecting national security by discouraging actions that have the potential to provoke anti-nationalist tendencies and separatist activities.
- **Protect democratic values:**
 - It hinders individuals from utilizing speech or expression to subvert the government's legitimacy, a situation that could otherwise disrupt the stability of the democratic system.
- **Maintaining public order:**
 - These laws can serve as a means to discourage individuals or groups from participating in actions that could result in communal tensions or public turmoil.

CRITICISMS OF THE SEDITION LAW

- **Outdated law and inherits the colonial legacy:**
 - During the colonial era, sedition was employed by British authorities to imprison individuals who voiced objections to British policies.
 - Prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement like Lokmanya Tilak, and Bhagat Singh were found guilty of engaging in "seditious" speeches, writings, and actions under British rule.
- **Misuse for political purposes:**
 - At times, this legal provision is exploited for political wrongdoing and personal political gain, mostly for exploiting opposition parties.
- **Against the Freedom of speech and expression:**
 - It restricts the rights guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution, which pertains to freedom of speech and expression.
- **Low conviction rates:**
 - A conviction rate of around 3% in sedition cases suggests that the law is primarily employed to instil fear and stifle dissent or criticism. (NCRB Report)

MAJOR COURT JUDGEMENTS RELATED TO SEDITION IN INDIA

CASE	JUDGEMENT
1. Romesh Thapar v. the State of Madras and Brij Bhushan and Others v. the State of Delhi (1950)	The Supreme Court determined that imposing speech limitations based on the potential for disturbing peace was illegal.
2. Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar (1962)	The Supreme Court stated that advocating "revolution" or violent government overthrow constitutes sedition, including inciting chaos.

**3. Balwanth Singh vs
State of Punjab 1995**

The Supreme Court clarified that mere chanting of slogans does not warrant imprisonment under Section 124A unless it leads to public disturbance.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING SEDITION IN INDIA

➤ **LAW COMMISSION 279th report:**

- The Law Commission report suggests keeping the controversial Sedition law (Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code)
- But proposes three main changes: expanding its applicability, imposing harsher penalties, and introducing procedural safeguards to prevent misuse.
- Specifically, it recommends raising the minimum imprisonment from 3 to 7 years in the interest of national security.

WAY FORWARD

➤ **Stricter safeguards:**

Introduce stricter procedural safeguards to prevent misuse of the law, such as requiring higher standards of evidence, independent oversight, and thorough judicial scrutiny before charges are filed.

➤ **International standards:**

Align the sedition law with international human rights standards to ensure that it respects freedom of speech and expression as recognized in international treaties.



TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS TO EMPOWER PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SOURCE: [PIB](#)

WHY IN NEWS

- Minister of State, Km. Pratima Bhoumik, revealed five innovative programs at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre (DAIC).
- This significant occasion marked the introduction of pioneering initiatives designed to positively impact the lives of individuals with disabilities (Divyangjan), highlighting the government's steadfast dedication to their comprehensive growth and empowerment.

TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVES :

PM DAKSH DEPwD portal would serve as a one-stop platform for individuals with disabilities seeking skill training and job prospects. This aligns with PM Modi's vision of inclusive development for all, underlining trust and collective efforts.

About the PM DAKSH Portal:

- Launched by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.
- Aims to offer skill training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Eligibility: Individuals aged 18-45 qualify for skill development training.
- Key features include seamless registration via the Unique Disability ID (UDID), course selection based on interests and needs, access to training partners, and online study materials, among others.

Pathways to access

The book titled "**Courts on Disability Rights**" has assembled significant legal rulings related to disability rights from both the Supreme Court and various high courts. It serves as a **valuable reference resource** for individuals with disabilities and those involved in the disability advocacy field.

Online case monitoring

The new application will handle complaints filed by persons with disabilities in a paperless way, making it easier to file complaints, get remainder and schedule hearings.

UDID Portal

Its primary emphasis is on data. DEPwD intends to share anonymized data through the UDID portal for research purposes, enabling evidence-based decision-making through the use of authentic information

PM Daksh Portal

This digital platform is designed to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The portal will include a variety of skill training choices, easy registration via UDID, and access to skill training options based on one's location, among other features.

MOU with Council of architecture

The MOU mandates inclusion of universal accessibility courses in Bachelor of Architecture programs and jointly creates certified courses for accessibility audits.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN INDIA

- Societal stigma and discrimination:
 - Approximately 400 million disabled individuals reside in developing countries, where they are often denied essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment.
- Lack of employment opportunities:
 - According to the World Health Organization (WHO), individuals with disabilities face significant obstacles to accessing social and economic development opportunities.
 - Nearly 70% of people with disabilities in these regions are without jobs.
- Limited accessibility:
 - Public infrastructure and transportation often lack proper accessibility features, making it difficult for disabled individuals to move around independently.
- Inadequate policies formulations:
 - Despite various policies and laws in place to protect the rights of disabled individuals, effective implementation and enforcement can be lacking.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES FOR THE WELFARE OF THE DISABLED PEOPLE

Welfare Measure	Objective
1. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016	Enhance their physical, social, and psychological recovery by mitigating the impacts of disabilities and boosting their economic capabilities.
2. Accessible India Campaign	Barrier free and conducive environment for Divyangjan
3. Deen Dayal Disabled Rehabilitation scheme	Central sector scheme for rehabilitation and education of persons with disabilities.
4. Unique Disability Identification Project	Database for persons with disabilities.

WAY FORWARD

- **Promotion of inclusivity:**
Encourage schools, colleges, and workplaces to foster a culture of inclusion and diversity.
- **Skill development and vocational training:**
Establish skill development and vocational training centers tailored to the needs of disabled individuals.
- **Sensitisation:**
Train government officials, healthcare providers, and service providers to be more sensitive to the needs and rights of disabled individuals.

OIL PALM PLANTATION

SOURCE: [DOWN TO EARTH](#)

WHY IN NEWS?

- Assam's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared a substantial oil palm plantation initiative in collaboration with Patanjali Food Limited (PFL).
- This ambitious endeavour aligns with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's objective of attaining self-reliance in edible oil production and aims to cultivate a single crop on 370,000 hectares of land, as per the announcement.

ABOUT OIL PALM

- Palm oil is a consumable vegetable oil extracted from the reddish pulp of oil palm fruits.
- Its applications range from cooking oil to ingredients in cosmetics, processed foods, personal care products like soaps and shampoos, and even biofuel production.
- The lion's share of global palm oil production, nearly 90%, comes from Indonesia and Malaysia, with Indonesia leading the way by producing over 45 million tonnes in 2021.
- The oil palm has its origins in West Africa and was brought to India as a profitable agricultural crop (cash crop).
- Its cultivation is primarily centered in the southern and northeastern regions of India, encompassing states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Mizoram.



BENEFITS OF OIL PALM CULTIVATION

- **Reduction in oil import:**
Through domestic edible oil production, India has the potential to conserve its foreign exchange reserves that would otherwise go toward imports.
This could positively influence the nation's economy by lowering trade imbalances and bolstering domestic sectors.
- **Food security:**
Enhances food security by increasing the availability of affordable cooking oil, especially in regions where other edible oils may be scarce.
- **Diversification of income:**
Provides farmers with an additional source of income, promoting agricultural diversification and reducing reliance on single crops.
- **Energy security:**
Oil palm is also used to produce biodiesel which can help in domestic energy production.
- **Industrial applications:**
Palm oil has a wide range of industrial applications, including biodiesel production, which can help meet the country's energy needs.

CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH OIL PALM CULTIVATION

- **Large scale deforestation:**
 - Large-scale oil palm cultivation can lead to deforestation, habitat loss, and biodiversity degradation. This poses significant environmental risks, especially in ecologically sensitive regions.
- **Loss of Biodiversity:**
 - Palm oil is not only detrimental to the environment and a significant contributor to climate change, but it also stands as the primary driver behind the endangerment of orangutans.
 - Annually, it is estimated that a substantial number of orangutans, ranging from 1,000 to 5,000, lose their lives in palm oil concessions.
- **Water scarcity:**
 - Oil palm requires substantial water for irrigation, which can strain local water resources, leading to water scarcity issues.
- **Displacements of local communities:**
 - Cultivation of oil palm requires land on a large scale which can cause displacement of the local communities.
- **Market volatility:**
 - The worldwide palm oil market is susceptible to multiple factors, such as international trade regulations, weather patterns, and consumer choices. These fluctuations can have repercussions on the earnings and financial security of smallholder farmers.

GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO PROMOTE OIL PALM CULTIVATION

INITIATIVE	OBJECTIVE
1. OIL PALM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	During the Eighth and Ninth Plans (1992-2002), a comprehensive Centrally Sponsored Scheme known as the Oil Palm Development Programme (OPDP) was initiated.
2. Integrated Scheme of Oilseeds, Pulses, Oil Palm and Maize (ISOPOM).	Tenth and Eleventh Plans spanning from 2002 to 2012, the Indian government extended assistance for oil palm cultivation through this Centrally sponsored scheme.
3. Special program on Oil Palm Area expansion	To enhance oil palm cultivation, the Indian government introduced a Special Programme for Expanding Oil Palm Area (OPAE) under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) from 2011-12 to 2014-15.
4. National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)	For increasing area under cultivation and productivity in 12 States
5. National Mission on edible oils-Oil Palm	To increase domestic with special focus on North East and Andaman and Nicobar.

WAY FORWARD

- **Promote sustainable practices:**
Encourage and ensure the adoption of eco-friendly farming techniques in oil palm cultivation, reforestation efforts, and the utilization of organic farming approaches.
- **Environmental impact assessment:**
Conduct comprehensive environmental impact assessments before approving new plantations to assess potential ecological risks.
- **Stringent regulations:**
Strengthen and enforce regulations to monitor and control the industry, ensuring compliance with sustainability and environmental standards.

