

“Live boldly. Push yourself. Don't settle.” Jojo Moyes**INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL****INDIA TO CONTROL MATTALA AIRPORT IN HAMBANTOTA**

India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's loss-making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.

The \$210 million facility, 241km south-east of Colombo, is dubbed the “world's emptiest airport” due to a lack of flights.

The joint venture would see India gain a major stake of the airport.

Mattala airport, named after former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, was one of the major infrastructure projects of Rajapaksa's nearly a decade-long rule.

The project was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans. The airport was officially opened in March 2013.

The only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.

The government in 2017 invited investors to turn the airport into a profit-sharing joint venture. However no proposals were received to operate, manage and maintain it.

Hambantota Seaport kneel to China to recover losses

The seaport built in Hambantota, another Rajapaksa pet project, has been leased to China to set off Chinese loans as equity.

The Hambantota port was a major Chinese-assisted infrastructure project in the home district of Rajapaksa, whose nearly a decade-long rule was ended by President Maithripala Sirisena in 2015.

However, the regime change is not attributed to disfavor India, unlike that has been the case with the Maldives.

NATIONAL**SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA AS 'MASTER OF ROSTER'**

The ‘Chief Justice of India’ (CJI) is an individual judge and not the powerful collective of five senior-most judges of the Supreme Court called the ‘Collegium’, held the Supreme Court.

And it is this exclusive authority of this individual judge, who is the “spokesperson of the court”, to allocate cases to fellow judges as the ‘Master of Roster’, a Bench of Justices A.K. Sikri and Ashok Bhushan declared in their separate but concurring opinions.

The judgment is based on a petition filed by former Union Law Minister to have a collegium of Supreme Court judges to collectively allocate cases rather than leave the entire power in the hands of the CJI in his administrative capacity as the ‘Master of Roster’.

SC highlighted that the CJI owes a moral responsibility to his colleagues and the public at large while flexing his powers as ‘Master of Roster’ to allocate cases.

CJI Dipak Misra and some of his predecessors were criticised by four of his senior-most judges led by Justice Chelameswar for allocating cases of national importance to select judges.

They hinted that “absolute discretion” cannot be confined in just one man, the CJI.

Justice Sikri's opinion listed some of the qualities a CJI should possess as the Master of Roster, including balance, fortitude, moral courage and independence of mind.

As the court's spokesperson, it is the CJI's duty to usher in and administer reform as a continuous process.

Erosion of credibility of judiciary is the greatest threat.

CJI is the “ultimate authority to distribute judicial work

Both Justices Sikri and Bhushan concurred that neither Article 145 (rules of court) and the Supreme Court Rules say the ‘Chief Justice of India’ as the Collegium.

Unlike having the Collegium to decide the appointment and transfer of judges, a collective deciding which cases should go to which Bench would affect the day-to-day functioning of the court.

The role of the CJI as the Master of Roster was qualified by the consensus from other judges.

The CJI took into consideration the expertise, capacity and interest of his fellow judges while allocating cases to them.

This duty should be left to his wisdom.

It was argued that the authority of the CJI as the ‘Master of Roster’ to allocate cases to Benches should not be reduced to an “absolute, singular and arbitrary power”.

The court rejected proposal that the CJI should only sit with two of his senior most judges.

And the Constitution Bench should be either a combination of the five senior most judges or three senior most judges, including him, and two junior most judges.

The court said all this should be left to the CJI to decide on.

CJI only first among equals

Justice Sikri said though the Constitution is silent on the exact role of the CJI, precedents, healthy practices and conventions – engrafted in the Supreme Court Rules – have moulded the powers and duties of the office.

Justice Sikri wrote that the **CJI is only ‘first among equals’ in his judicial functions on the Bench.**

The opinion of the CJI on the Bench carries the same weight as any other member of the Bench.

This way, the CJI may hold the minority view in a case while the majority opinion on the Bench becomes the law.

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, who was asked to assist the court, had argued that

having a Collegium of the five senior most judges to allocate cases among all judges in the court would only invite chaos.

Unlike the Collegium to recommend new judges, a collegium to allocate cases would mean judges deciding for themselves which cases they should hear.

Better have the CJI decide for all as the Master of Roster.

Contradicting the Third Judges Case (1998) with recent judgments:

The Judges case of 1998 has inferred that the Supreme Court itself had interpreted the term ‘Chief Justice of India’ to collectively mean the CJI and his four senior most judges.

The Bench heard the petition despite two separate judgments by the Supreme Court in November 2017 and April this year upholding the CJI’s complete administrative authority to allocate cases and constitute Benches.

Both these judgments were pronounced by Benches led by **CJI Dipak Misra and the verdict had called the CJI an “institution in himself”.**

GOVT. DEPLOYS 800 IAS OFFICERS FOR VILLAGE OUTREACH

To ensure delivery of Central welfare schemes a battalion of Central Govt IAS officers has been drafted to ensure on the ground implementation as the **Centre races to saturate 117 “aspirational districts”** with seven flagship social welfare schemes by Independence Day.

PM himself has been monitoring the implementation of these schemes by meeting various beneficiaries and has pointed to this campaign as a model for future of welfare delivery.

At least 800 Deputy Secretaries, Under-Secretaries and Director-level officers, drawn from Ministries as diverse as Defence and Urban Affairs, have been assigned about 75 villages to visit, as part of the Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (EGSA) from June 1 to August 15.

In total, 49,178 villages — most with a majority SC/ST population — are being targeted.

Senior officials from the Ministries of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, and the Department of Personnel and Training are jointly coordinating the drive.

Central officials are being absorbed into EGSA duty for at least 15 working days.

In each village, the Central team convenes a meeting of villagers and beneficiaries along with a State government or district official, a lead bank representative and local officials from the agencies responsible for enrolling people into the schemes.

They monitor the scheme, get feedback. If there are any hurdles, they can sort it out on the spot. Ex. central officers could direct the local representatives to give immediate sanction for gas cylinders, bank accounts or electricity connections.

The teams can also directly input the day's progress into a **data system that can be tracked live on the EGSA dashboard "egsa.nic.in"**.

Senior Ministry officials also make direct daily calls to a section of District Collectors to monitor progress, while third-party observers for each district —mostly from NGOs or academia — who do random checks of villages and report back to the Ministry.

The rate of enrolment during the duration of the scheme has been the most impressive in the Saubhagya scheme, and in the Indra Dhanush Missions.

Addressing the NITI Aayog Governing Council earlier this month, PM had said the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan has emerged as a new model for implementation of schemes.

However, the large-scale involvement of Central officers raises questions about the viability of such drives, and about roles in a federal democracy.

Dissent of the state officials due to central interference and sidelined pending workload was the most common concern raised.

This is a deeply problematic way of going about welfare delivery as sought by some states.

Constitutionally, while the Centre has higher powers of taxation, the bulk of the expenditure on welfare is to be done by the States.

Its not the 'Centre' who formulates but the 'State' who implements

The centralizing trend in flagship welfare schemes allows the ruling party at the Centre to draw political mileage and build vote banks.

Direct connections to the district administration tend to bypass State administrations, while sending out large Central teams to do the work of local officials fails to empower local human resources.

NATIONAL HEALTH STACK

NITI Aayog has proposed creation of National Health Stack (NHS), a centralized health record for all citizens of the country, in order to streamline the health information and facilitate effective management of the same.

India today is witnessing significant trends in health: increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases for instance, as well as marked demographic shifts. Climbing out-of-pocket costs is becoming difficult for most households.

The proposed NHS is an approach to address the challenge and seeks to employ latest technology including Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning Artificial Intelligence, a state of the art Policy Mark-up Language and create a unified health identity of citizens – as they navigate across services across levels of care, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and also across Public and Private.

The innovativeness of the proposed National Health Stack design lies in its ability to leverage a shared public good – a strong digital spine built with a deep understanding of the incentive structures of the system. Once implemented, the National Health Stack will significantly bring down the costs of health protection, converge disparate systems

to ensure a cashless and seamlessly integrated experience for the poorest beneficiaries, and promote wellness across the population.

NASSCOM UNVEILS CENTRE FOR DATA, AI

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), India's premier software lobby, has opened a Center of Excellence (CoE) for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence in Bangalore.

Nasscom also signed a MoU with NITI Aayog to collaboratively foster applied research, accelerating adoption and ethics, privacy and security.

The CoE initiative is a nationwide programme on innovation, focusing on solutions in smart manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, agriculture, energy, IoT, banking and financial services, retail, telecom, and host of emerging technologies.

The center aims to "support SMBs, by fast-tracking their product development, provide market access to enterprises and assist them by co-creating programs along with other industry partners and start-ups to solve complex and real-world business problems." With the aim to strengthen the country's AI ecosystem, the CoE and MoU, both aim to serve as a platform for intelligence-sharing and technology collaboration between stakeholders to build collective capabilities for the industry and country in the cutting-edge areas of artificial intelligence.

NASSCOM : National Association of Software & Service Companies

It is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.

Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organization.

NASSCOM facilitates business and trade in software and services and encourages the advancement of research in software technology. It is registered under the Indian Societies Act, 1860.

CRYPTOCURRENCY TRADE BRACES FOR RBI BAN

Recently, the Supreme Court has refused to stay the RBI's directive to banks instructing them to stop all business with dealing in crypto currencies.

The RBI's directive and SC's verdict have mixed reactions from industry players and analysts.

The apex bank's decision is a big blow to not only cryptocurrency trading platform, but also individuals holding cryptocurrency.

The regulatory framework is being built in relation to the cryptocurrency market in India.

This framework would not have been in the process of development if the government had the intension to ban cryptocurrencies entirely.

Cryptocurrency is digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange that uses strong cryptography to secure financial transactions.

Cryptocurrency is a kind of digital currency, virtual currency, or alternative currency.

Cryptocurrencies use decentralized control as opposed to centralized electronic money and central banking system.
