

1. MPLADS, its Suspension, and Why it Must Go

Context:

- The Government Recently Announced to suspend the **Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** for two years.
- The Government's Reason is this: to use these Funds "to strengthen the Government's efforts in Managing the Challenges and adverse impact of **COVID-19** in the country"

What is MPLAD Scheme?

- The Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) is a **Central Sector Scheme which was Launched in 1993-94.**
- The Scheme enables the Members of Parliament to recommend works for creation of durable community assets based on locally felt needs to be taken up in their constituencies in the area of national priorities namely drinking water, education, public health, sanitation, roads etc.
- The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been Responsible for the Policy Formulation, Release of Funds** and prescribing monitoring mechanism for implementation of the Scheme.

Features:

- The MPLADS is a Plan Scheme fully funded by Government of India. The annual MPLADS fund **entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.**
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- In order to encourage trusts and societies for the betterment of tribal people, a ceiling of Rs. 75 lakh is stipulated for building assets by trusts and societies subject to conditions prescribed in the scheme guidelines.
- Lok Sabha Members can recommend works within their Constituencies and Elected Members of Rajya Sabha can recommend works within the State of Election (with select exceptions). Nominated Members of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.

- **All works to Meet Locally Felt Infrastructure and Development needs**, with an emphasis on creation of durable assets in the constituency are permissible under MPLADS as prescribed in the scheme guidelines. Expenditure on specified items of non-durable nature are also permitted as listed in the guidelines.

Why it must be Completely Abolished?

- The **scheme violates one of the Cardinal Principles, Separation of powers**. Simply put, this scheme, in effect, gives an executive function to legislators (read legislature)
- Implementation of the scheme has always left much to be desired
- There are wide variations in the **utilisation of the MPLAD amount in various constituencies**. Since the MPLADS began in 1993, ₹5,000 crore was lying unspent with various district authorities by May 15, 2015
- Money under MPLADS being used to appease or oblige two sets of people: opinion-makers or opinion-influencers, and favourite contractors. An often-heard tale is that of the contractor being a relative, close friend, or a confidant of the MP, and the contractor and the MP being financially linked with each other
- Reports of underutilisation and **misutilisation of MPLADS funds continue to surface at Regular Intervals but there seems** to have been no serious attempt to do anything about it till now

Conclusion:

- Therefore, it would be in order to convert the two-year suspension into the complete abolition of this undesirable and unconstitutional scheme

Source: The Hindu