

15th July 2021

Supreme Court strikes down Tribunals Ordinance provision fixing 4-year term for members

In a 2:1 verdict, the Supreme Court on 14th July 2021 struck down certain provisions of the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021 relating to minimum age requirement of 50 for appointment as Chairperson or Members and fixing their tenure at four years.

The court held certain provisions of Section 184 of the Finance Act, 2017, introduced by Section 12 of the Tribunals Reforms (Rationalisation and Conditions of Service) Ordinance, 2021 as void, inoperative and unconstitutional.

Section 184 empowered the government to make rules to provide for qualifications, appointment, term of office, salaries and allowances, resignation, removal and other terms and conditions of service of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson (and commensurate positions bearing different nomenclature) and other Members of tribunals.

The majority verdict said the term of Chairperson of a tribunal shall be five years or till she or he attains the age of 70, whichever is earlier, and the term of a Member of a tribunal shall be five years or till she or he attains the age of 67, whichever is earlier.

It also noted that “the conditions of service for appointment to the posts of Chairpersons and Members [of Tribunals] have been mired in controversy for the past several years, thereby, adversely affecting the basic functioning of tribunals”. It said the court “is aghast to note that some tribunals are on the verge of closure due to the absence of Members”.

147 women officers granted Permanent Commission

The Army has granted Permanent Commission to 147 additional women officers, months after the Supreme Court criticised it for denying women the same despite a landmark verdict last year — when the court directed the Centre to ensure that women SSC officers are given PC in the Army.

147 more women officers are being granted PC, taking the total PC granted to 424 out of the 615 officers considered.

The Army said a Special Number 5 Selection Board to screen women officers for PC was set up in September last year after the Supreme Court verdict and the results were declared in November.

The women officers granted PC will undergo “special training courses and challenging military assignments to empower them for higher leadership roles in the Indian Army”.

Haryana starts pilot of country's 1st grain ATM

The Haryana government, for the very first time, has come up with the concept of one-of-its-kind “Grain ATMs” to save consumers from standing in long queues outside ration depots and to ensure that an adequate quantity of grains is disbursed to beneficiaries.

It is an automatic machine which works like a bank ATM. This machine will be installed under the ‘World Food Programme’ of United Nation, and is called Automated, Multi Commodity, Grain Dispensing Machine.

Three types of grains — wheat, rice, and millet — can be distributed through this machine. At present, distribution of wheat has been started from the Grain ATM machine installed in Farrukhnagar (Gurugram).

Amrita Sher-Gil work fetches Rs 37.8 cr, second-highest after Gaitonde’s

A painting by Amrita Sher-Gil, In the Ladies’ Enclosure (1938), fetched Rs 37.8 crore (USD 5.14 million) at auction house Saffronart’s sale in Mumbai on 13th July 2021. This is the highest achieved by the artist in an auction, and the second-most expensive artwork by an Indian.

V S Gaitonde’s Untitled (1961), sold for Rs 39.98 crore in March this year at Saffronart, remains the most expensive by an Indian artist. The previous record for Sher-Gil was Rs 18.7 crore for The Little Girl in Blue (1934) at Sotheby’s auction in Mumbai in 2018, according to art market intelligence firm Artery India.

Sher-Gil is India’s most famous woman artist and recognised by the Indian government as a “National Treasure”, an honour which makes it illegal to take her art out of the country. The Indo-Hungarian artist died in 1941 at the age of 28.

AYUSH Mission to remain centrally sponsored

To reduce the burden on the country’s healthcare infrastructure, the Cabinet on 14th July 2021 approved continuation of the National AYUSH Mission as a centrally sponsored scheme till March 2026. The project will have a total cost of Rs 4,603 crore, of which the Centre will bear Rs 3,000 crore share, and the states will cover the rest.

The scheme involves expansion of the AYUSH sector to promote holistic health of Indians. Under the scheme, old and traditional medicinal systems would be promoted and AYUSH wellness centres, medical colleges, hospitals and dispensaries will be set up and upgraded.

The government said in a statement that the Mission, launched in 2014, is being implemented by the Ministry of AYUSH with the objective of providing “cost effective AYUSH services, with universal access through upgrading AYUSH hospitals and dispensaries, co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centers, Community Health Centers and District Hospitals”.