

1. India, Qatar elevate ties to strategic partnership

Introduction



Qatar, a major natural gas supplier to India, signed an agreement to elevate India-Qatar relationship to the level of a strategic partnership. The agreement was signed between the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the visiting Emir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani.

As of February 2025, India and Qatar have been actively enhancing their bilateral relations across various sectors, including trade, energy, and cultural exchanges.

Trade Relations

In February 2025, during a two-day official visit to New Delhi by Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, both nations agreed to double their trade volume to \$28 billion over the next five years. They are also exploring the possibility of signing a free trade agreement to facilitate this growth.

Energy Cooperation

Energy collaboration remains a cornerstone of India-Qatar relations. India is boosting gas imports as Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to raise the share of gas in the country's energy mix to 15% by 2030 from about 6.5% now. Qatar, among the world's top LNG exporters, is India's biggest LNG supplier.

In August 2023, QatarEnergy and GAIL (India) Ltd. signed a long-term agreement for the supply of over 1 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) annually for 20 years. Further strengthening this partnership, in February 2024, QatarEnergy entered into a deal with Petronet LNG to supply 7.5 million metric tons of LNG per year from 2028 to 2048.

Cultural and People-to-People Ties

The Indian expatriate community in Qatar, numbering approximately 840,000, continues to be a vital link between the two countries. Their contributions have been acknowledged in various bilateral discussions, emphasizing the importance of cultural and people-to-people connections.

Overall, the relationship between India and Qatar is on a positive trajectory, marked by mutual efforts to enhance cooperation across multiple domains.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express and The Hindu

2. What is the MPID Act under which the Torres scam is being investigated in Maharashtra?

Introduction

Investors who were defrauded in the Torres Ponzi scam may receive about Rs 40 crore over the next six months. The Mumbai Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) has begun the procedure to commence auctioning the seized properties of the accused parties, under the MPID Act.



What happened earlier?

In January, thousands of investors staged protests outside multiple Torres outlets in Mumbai after they suddenly stopped receiving their promised interest payments in various investment schemes in late December 2024.

According to the EOW investigation, the company had allegedly floated multiple schemes encouraging them to buy jewellery at exorbitant weekly interest rates, with some yielding an annual return of up to 500 per cent. The company allegedly lured them with incentives such as iPhones, jewellery and other expensive gifts, including branded bags, cars, and apartments. The payments suddenly stopped in December 2024, causing panic among those who had invested with Torres.

This case is the latest to be registered under the MPID Act which concerns the attachment of seized assets from fraudulent establishments and their sale and distribution. Similar acts have been enacted in other states. Here is what to know about the act.

What is the MPID Act and why was it passed in Maharashtra?

The Maharashtra Protection of Interest of Depositors (in Financial Establishments) Act, 1999, was enacted by the state legislature, and received the President's assent on January 21, 2000. At its introduction, the bill identified the growth of financial establishments in the state, with some intending to defraud the public by grabbing their deposited money. These investors mostly belonged to the middle class and poor economic backgrounds, and were lured with the promise of unprecedented interest rates or returns.

What are the main provisions of the Act?

The Act states that any financial establishment which fraudulently defaults repayment of deposit on maturity along with benefit in the form of interest, bonus, profit as assured, then every person including its promoter, partner, director, manager, employee responsible for the management or conducting business, can be held responsible. If found guilty, they can be sentenced to imprisonment for a maximum term of six years and fined up to Rs 1 lakh.

The Act also empowers the government to issue an order attaching the money or other property believed to have been acquired by the financial establishment. It lays out the

procedure to be followed with powers designated to courts to make the order of attachment absolute.

Once an order is passed, the court can issue directions for the sale of the assets and its equitable distribution of the amount among the depositors. Unlike the provisions in criminal law which deal with cheating and fraud by financial establishments, the speedy procedure for attachment and distribution of the properties makes the Act significant for depositors.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

3. What is Article 101(4)? Why should Amritpal not worry about it?

Introduction

JAILED MP AMRITPAL SINGH MOVES PUNJAB AND HARYANA HC REQUESTING PERMISSION TO ATTEND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS



Incarcerated Khadoor Sahib MP Amritpal Singh recently moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court to attend the ongoing Parliament session, lest he lose his seat because of his prolonged absence from the House.

Amritpal, who faces charges under the stringent National Security Act, has been detained in Dibrugarh since April 2023. He contested and won the 2024 Lok Sabha election from prison, but thus far has an attendance of only 2%.

The provision

"If for a period of sixty days a member of either House of Parliament is without permission of the House absent from all meetings thereof, the House may declare his seat vacant," Article 101(4) says. The 60 days, however, do not account for "any period during which the House is prorogued or is adjourned for more than four consecutive days".

Effectively, the period of absence is only calculated based on the actual sittings of Parliament. Amritpal, for instance, only attended one sitting of the Lok Sabha — the one in which he was sworn in last July. Since then, he has remained in detention in Assam. This has amounted to nearly 50 absences thus far.

However, as former Lok Sabha Secretary General told, he does not recall a single instance in which Article 101(4) was invoked, and an MP lost her seat as a result.

MPs can seek leave

The operative term in Article 101(4) is "without permission of the House". For long absences, MPs write to the 'Committee on Absence of Members from the Sittings of the House', the parliamentary panel that deals with this issue.

The committee makes recommendations on each leave application, which are then ratified by the House concerned. In practice, however, applications are seldom rejected. Past leave application reports list illness — their own or some relative's — as the most common reason

for MPs being granted leave. That said, members have requested and been granted leave on the count of being imprisoned as well.

Matter Put to vote to decide vacancy

Even if an MP is absent for more than 60 days, the House has to “declare” the seat vacant, meaning the matter has to be put to vote. This makes it even less likely that Amritpal will end up losing his seat simply because he is unable to attend proceedings.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Polity

Source: Indian Express

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