

### **Office of profit: EC wants 20 AAP MLAs disqualified**

In a setback to the AamAadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi, the Election Commission (EC) recommended to President that 20 of its MLAs be disqualified for holding offices of profit. The EC's counsel is binding on the President.

#### **Timeline:**

The controversy was triggered when 21 AAP MLAs were appointed Parliamentary Secretaries in March 2015.

- The Delhi government then introduced an amendment to the Delhi Members of Legislative Assembly (Removal of Disqualification) Act, exempting the post from the definition of “office-of-profit.” President Pranab Mukherjee rejected the amendment in June 2015.
- Advocate Prashant Patel then petitioned the President seeking the MLAs’ disqualification. The plea was then referred to the EC.
- In December 2015, the Commission issued notice to the petitioner to furnish relevant documents and subsequently, the hearing on the issue started after the MLAs were also served notices asking for their response. The legislators submitted that they had not drawn any pecuniary benefit from the post and therefore, they were not liable to be disqualified.
- The issue also came up before the Delhi High Court, which — on September 8, 2016, — set aside the appointment of MLAs as Parliamentary Secretaries ab initio as the State government had not taken the concurrence of the Delhi Lieutenant-Governor.
- The affected MLAs then argued before the Commission that Mr. Patel’s petition was rendered infructuous owing to the High Court decision.
- However, in June 2017, the EC held that the legislators did “hold de facto the office of parliamentary secretaries.

**Article 102 (1)(a)** A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of either House of Parliament-if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder.

### **India admitted to Australia Group**

India joined the Australia Group, saying the membership will be mutually beneficial.

Govt said India’s entry into the group, which aims to prevent proliferation of biological and chemical weapons, would ensure a more secure world.

**Australia Group:** It is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) and an informal group of countries (now joined by the European Commission) established in 1985 (after the use of

chemical weapons by Iraq in 1984) to help member countries to identify those exports which need to be controlled so as not to contribute to the spread of chemical and biological weapons.

## **STATE-TELANGANA**

### **Centre urged to check spread of BG-III cotton**

Telangana government has requested the Centre to formulate protocols and guidelines at the earliest to take steps to check the spread of herbicide tolerant variety cotton seed, popularly known as BG-III, which is not cleared by the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), and is harming the biodiversity in the country.

- A detailed presentation was made on the unauthorised spread of the unapproved cotton variety by Director of Telangana State Seed and Organic Certification Authority K. Keshavulu before the visiting team of Field-level Inspection and Scientific Evaluation Committee (FISEC) appointed by the Centre on the issue of BG-III.
- The high-level team comprising officials from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University visited Jogulamba-Gadwal, Vikarabad and Mancherial district before meeting the stakeholders, including seed growers, dealers, national and State seed associations .

All the stakeholders are in total confusion on the issue of BG-III in the absence of any guidelines from the Centre since the seed was unapproved.