

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

COMING SOON, A 'CAFETERIA' FOR OIL SPILL-HIT BIRDS AT CREEK IN T.N.

CONTEXT: Experts from the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) and the Besant Memorial Animal Dispensary (BMAD) are planning to establish feeding stations for birds at the creek, where contamination due to an oil spill from industries in Manali has brought down the bird population drastically.



The State Department of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, the nodal agency for the oil spill clean-up, has roped in WTI to work with local volunteers and the Wildlife Warden, Chennai, to assess how the affected birds could be rescued and rehabilitated. While most of the birds, both healthy and oil-drenched, have flown away to other parts of the city like Pallikaranai and Cooum, the authorities have found that 10 pelicans and painted storks have been badly affected.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

LOK SABHA PASSES BILL ON CEC, EC APPOINTMENT

CONTEXT: The Lok Sabha on Thursday passed the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 amid the scarce presence of Opposition members in the House.

The Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, which recently became an Act, replaced the existing Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991. Here are some of its Salient features:

- 1. Appointment Process:** Appoints the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs) by the President of India.
- 2. Selection committee:** Abolished the previous system of a three-member committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India.
- 3. Fixed term of six years:** Hold office for a fixed term of six years from the date of assuming office or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- 4. Reappointment:** Not eligible for reappointment for members of the Election Commission, once appointed.
- 5. Service conditions similar to Cabinet Secretary:** Salary, allowances, and other conditions of service of the CEC and ECs will be equivalent to those of the Cabinet Secretary.
- 6. Pension benefits:** They can choose to draw pension and other retirement benefits from their previous service.
- 7. Reduced number of ECs:** The number of ECs can be varied by the President, but shall not exceed four at any time.
- 8. Procedure for removal:** Removal of CEC and ECs is possible only through a resolution passed by both Houses of Parliament with a two-thirds majority.

Overall, the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023, represents a significant change in the way India's Election Commission is appointed and operates. While it aims to streamline the process and improve efficiency, it has also raised concerns about the Commission's independence and potential government influence.

CRACKING
CIVIL SERVICES
NO MORE A
DIFFICULT TASK

COME JOIN WITH US

 **VEDHIK**
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra



"Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence." - Robert Frost

DEFENCE MODERNISATION

INDIA RECEIVES PRICE BIDS FOR 26 RAFALE JETS, 3 SUBMARINES

CONTEXT: India has received price bids from France for the purchase of 26 Rafale-M carrier-based fighters as well as three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines.



While the Rafale-M is being processed through an Inter-governmental agreement, the submarine deal is a follow-on to the earlier contract with Naval Group, under which Mazagon Dockyard Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai manufactured six submarines in India.

Letter of Acceptance

On July 13, the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accorded its Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) for the procurement of the 26 Rafale-M fighters and three additional Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines from France. The deal includes 22 single-seater Rafale-M fighters and non-carrier compatible four twin-seater Rafale trainers. Earlier this week, France submitted a Letter of Acceptance, outlining the pricing and other details of its offer for 26 Rafale-M jets which are meant to operate from the Navy's two aircraft carriers. On December 11, Mazagon Dockyard Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai has submitted its commercial offer for three more Scorpenes to the Indian Navy.

While the formal procurement process has now commenced for the Rafale deal following receipt of the bid, it is not yet clear if a costing committee would be set up. The price and other terms of purchase will be negotiated with the French Government after taking into account all relevant aspects, including "comparative procurement price of similar aircraft by other countries.

Filling the gaps

The 26 jets are meant to fill the gap in the numbers till the indigenous Twin Engine Deck Based Fighter, still under development, is inducted into service. Both the contracts are expected to be concluded by end-2024 and delivery of the submarines is likely to begin in 2031.

The major difference between the existing Scorpenes and the new ones is their integrated combat system (ICS). The earlier submarines had systems from France, while the new ones will have indigenous ICS, with significant localised solutions provided by Bharat Electronics Limited in collaboration with French suppliers.

ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT

MISSING FOR 42 YEARS, NAMDAPHA FLYING SQUIRREL RESURFACES IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

CONTEXT: A team from the group from Aaranyak, an Assam-based biodiversity conservation group finally sighted the Namdapha flying squirrel in April 2022. A nocturnal flying squirrel has resurfaced in Arunachal Pradesh after going missing for 42 years.



The Namdapha flying squirrel (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) was last described in 1981 based on a single individual found in the 1,985 sq. km. Namdapha Tiger Reserve in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district. The failure of zoologists to locate the arboreal mammal during several expeditions thereafter generated two theories — that it could have been mistaken for the very similar red giant flying squirrel (*Petaurista petaurista*) sharing the same ecosystem or worse, become history.

Study to collect DNA

The team members said they are designing a study to collect DNA samples of the squirrel in the field for comparing the genetic material with the DNA of the individual collected in 1981, stored at the Zoological Survey of India in Kolkata.

VEDHIK IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Journey
www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Comprehensive Coaching For 568 Government Jobs

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

STAYING ALERT

CONTEXT: JN.1 variant, a descendent of the BA.2.86 Omicron lineage recorded a surge globally, reaching over 27 %, marking an eight-fold increase in just a month. The winter season in the northern hemisphere will thus make it easier for the virus to spread.

Despite increased immune escape capability and transmissibility, no major outbreak has been reported so far. JN.1 variant, first identified in Luxembourg in late August this year has also become the dominant variant in a few countries. The variant is very likely to become the dominant strain globally. Compared with the parent lineage BA.2.86, the JN.1 variant carries an additional mutation (L455S) in the spike protein, which enhances its immune evasion significantly. JN.1 variant, like other Omicron sublineages too has high transmissibility. Prompted by the presence of the JN.1 variant in most countries and its rapidly increasing spread, The World Health Organization classified JN.1 as a separate variant of interest a couple of days ago was previously tracked as part of BA.2.86 but now accounts for “vast majority” of the BA.2.86 lineage.

Though the first COVID-19 case caused by the JN.1 variant was detected in Kerala during routine surveillance, Goa has reported the greatest number of cases so far — 19. India has so far reported 21 JN.1 cases in all. All the 21 cases have been clinically mild, requiring home isolation. In the last fortnight, India has registered a sharp increase in the number of COVID-19 cases. While universal masking should surely not be made mandatory at this point in time, it is highly desirable that high-risk individuals mask up especially in poorly ventilated closed spaces as COVID-19 deaths in people with comorbidities are still being reported in India. In a welcome move, all patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) are being tested for COVID-19, and positive cases are sequenced as part of the revised surveillance guidelines. Likewise, there should be sustained focus on genome sequencing for novel variants. Finally, India should learn from past mistakes and refrain from shaming States that report more cases and/or novel variants. States that have better surveillance and display greater integrity in testing and reporting are bound to register more cases. Public health should neither be communalised nor politicised.

CRACKING
CIVIL SERVICES
NO MORE A
DIFFICULT TASK
COME JOIN WITH US



VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

SHOULD AN ALL-INDIA
JUDICIAL SERVICE BE
CREATED?

CONTEXT: The India Justice Report (IJR) 2022 shows that only 35 % of subordinate court judges are women. No State has been able to meet the quotas for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories in the subordinate judiciary.



All the States have been doing better over the years if you see Vidhi's data in the context of the representation of women in the subordinate judiciary. It might take some more time for the SC, ST, and OBC communities to get that level of representation, or at least proportionate to their populations. The key barrier to ensure appropriate representation of the SC, ST, and OBC communities is the entrance exam.

The district courts are argued in regional languages. A central recruitment exam will act as an impediment for candidates who are not well-versed in the regional language. Not only are cases argued in the regional language, but there is vast documentation in the regional language. Therefore, an understanding of the regional language and the dialect of the people giving evidence is important. Sometimes, even customs play an important role in judicial decision-making. Intensive language training would take an enormous amount of effort. A contrarian perspective is that civil servants overcome this barrier through intensive language training.

The Law Ministry, 5,388 posts of judicial officers are lying vacant in the district judiciary. Judicial vacancies, as a percentage of the total number of judges, is 20-25 %. Vacancies in the All-India Services (AIS) are also 20 % - 22 %. In fact, as per the data of the Union government, of 4 million civilian central posts, 1 million are vacant. We have seen the number of vacancies in the AIS as well. I don't see how this can be a solution. The AIJS attempts to induct lawyers between 35 to 45 years to the cadre of district judges. There is a problem. A 35- 45-year-old practising lawyer who has spent 15-20 years in the profession is likely to be well-established in their State with a steady stream of briefs. If they make it an

all-India service, which is again transferable, they may not like to leave their State and family. If the idea was to have a big talent pool, we will be losing out on that as well.

At present, the independence of the district judges from the State governments is guaranteed by the fact that the High Courts play a significant role in their appointment, transfer, and removal. There are multiple issues with our district judiciary and almost none of them will really be addressed by an AIJS. The need of the hour is to ensure that there is a smooth career path for those who enter the district judiciary to the High Courts and the Supreme Court. I think the real pressing need is that the areas outside the metros have a serious lack of infrastructure. The judges need to be supported so that they think that they are as much constitutional court judges as the Chief Justice of India.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

ANALYSING THE POST OFFICE BILL, 2023

CONTEXT: On December 18, the Parliament passed the Post Office Bill, 2023, that seeks to replace the colonial-era Indian Post Office Act, 1898. According to the government, the legislation is an attempt to ensure the effective functioning of the Postal Department as a messenger service and as a provider of banking facilities.



What are the key features of the Bill?

The Post Office Bill, 2023, which recently replaced the Indian Post Office Act of 1898, aims to modernize and streamline the legal framework governing India Post. Here are some of its salient features:

Simplified framework: The bill consolidates and simplifies existing laws and regulations, making them easier to understand and implement.

Citizen-centric focus: The bill emphasizes citizen-centric service delivery, aiming to improve efficiency, transparency, and accountability.

Key Provisions:

- Expansion of services:** The bill recognizes the expanded role of India Post beyond traditional mail services. It allows for offering financial services, e-commerce solutions, and other citizen-centric services.
- Tariff flexibility:** The central government has more flexibility in setting tariffs for various services, enabling them to be competitive and adapt to changing market conditions.
- Regulations for new technologies:** The bill provides a framework for regulating new technologies introduced by India Post, such as digital payments and electronic postal orders.
- Data privacy:** The officer-in-charge appointed by the Union government is empowered to 'intercept, open or detain' any postal article on grounds such as the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, emergency, public safety, or contravention of the provisions of the Bill or any other laws, including provisions for data protection and privacy while allowing India Post to utilize data for service improvement.
- Power to intercept packages:** The Union government by notification can also empower any officer of the Post Office to intercept, open, or detain packages suspected of containing any prohibited item to the customs authority or any other specified authority based on suspicion of illegality or national security concerns deliver a postal article.
- Exemption from liability:** The Bill exempts the Post Office from incurring any liability pertaining to its services specifically stipulating that no officer shall incur any liability unless the officer has acted fraudulently, or wilfully caused any loss, delay, or mis-delivery of service. There are also no offences and penalties specified under the Bill except one: amounts not paid by a user will be recoverable as arrears of land revenue. The bill offers partial exemption to India Post from liability for loss, mis-delivery, delay, or damage during service delivery. However, exceptions exist for gross negligence or willful misconduct.
- No criminal offenses:** The bill does not define any criminal offenses or penalties for violations, relying on other existing laws for such matters. The 1898 Act contained offences such as theft, misappropriation, or destruction of postal articles which are punishable with imprisonment up to seven years and a fine. However, such offences and penalties were subsequently removed by the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2023.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.



POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

QUESTIONABLE SEARCHES UNDER THE MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

CONTEXT: The enforcement of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (passed in the background of India's commitment to the international community to fight the drug menace and terrorism) has caused much consternation especially after its unusual interpretation by the Supreme Court of India in Vijay Madanlal Choudhary and Ors vs Union of India and Ors. (2022).

PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT

ENACTED: 2002

MANDATE:

Curb money laundering and to provide for seizure of property derived from money-laundering.

OBJECTIVES OF PMLA:

- Prevent and control money laundering.
- Confiscate and seize the property obtained from the laundered money.
- Deal with any other issue connected with money laundering in India.

DISPUTE REDRESSAL:

DISPUTE REDRESSAL:

ADJUDICATORY AUTHORITY

Constituted under Section 6 (1) of PMLA, 2002 to exercise jurisdiction, powers and authority conferred by or under PMLA, 2002.

Enjoy powers of a civil court under Sec. 5 of PMLA to confirm the order for provisional attachment or seizure of property for 150 days after due Police investigation.

APPELLATE TRIBUNAL

Constituted under Section 25 of PMLA, 2002 to exercise jurisdiction, powers and authority conferred by or under PMLA, 2002.

Enjoy powers to hear appeals against the orders of the Adjudicating Authority and the authorities under the PMLA, 2002.

SUPREME COURT

SCHEDULED OFFENCES

- Transnational crime under IPC
- NDPS Act, 1985
- Explosive Substances Act, 1908
- Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967
- Antiquities and Arts Treasures Act, 1972
- SEBI Act, 1992
- Customs Act, 1962
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976
- Counterfeiting currency notes
- Contravention related to manufactured drugs and preparations

PML (Amendment) Act, 2011

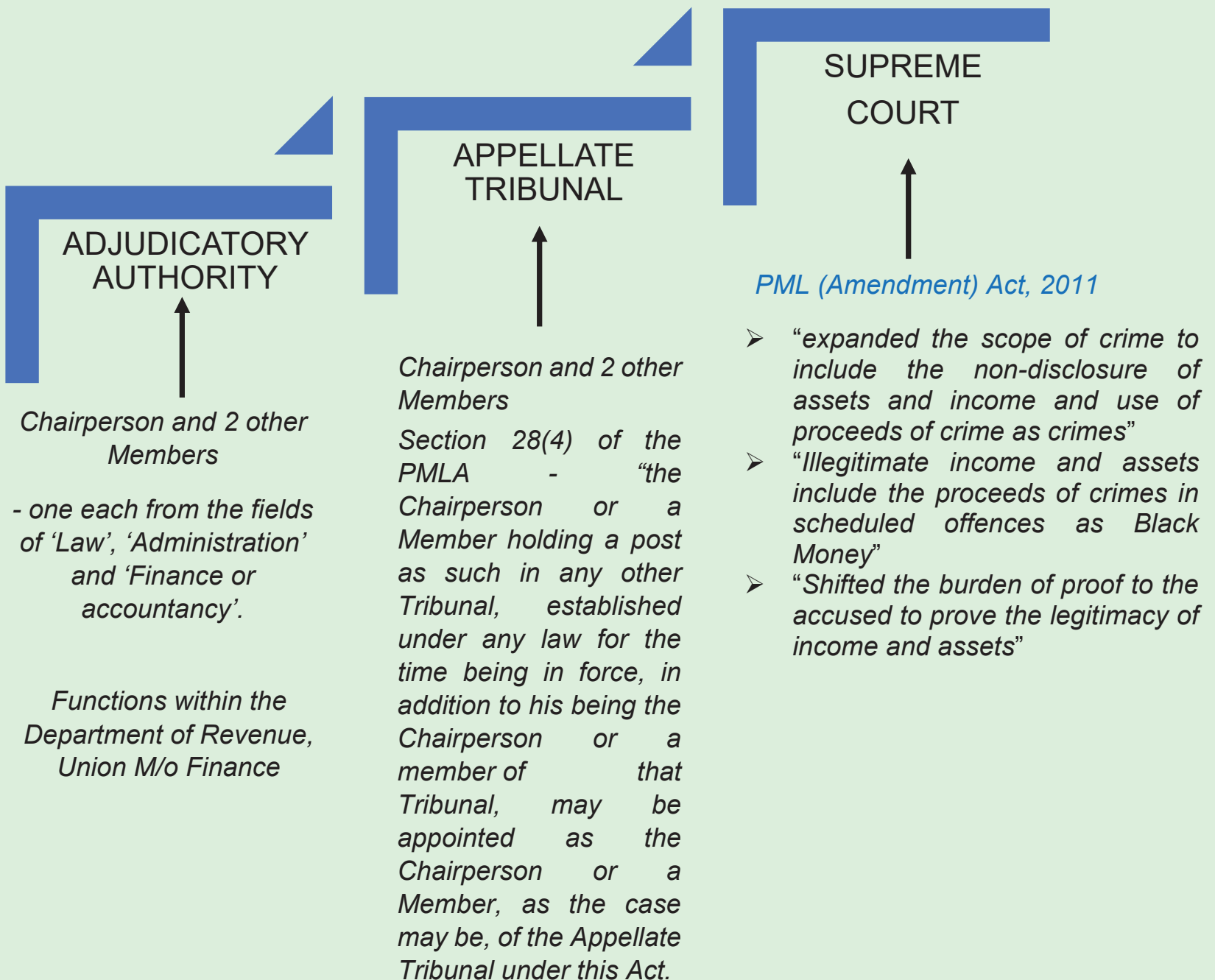
Funds shall be presumed to be involved in the offence, unless proven otherwise in the proceedings relating to money laundering.

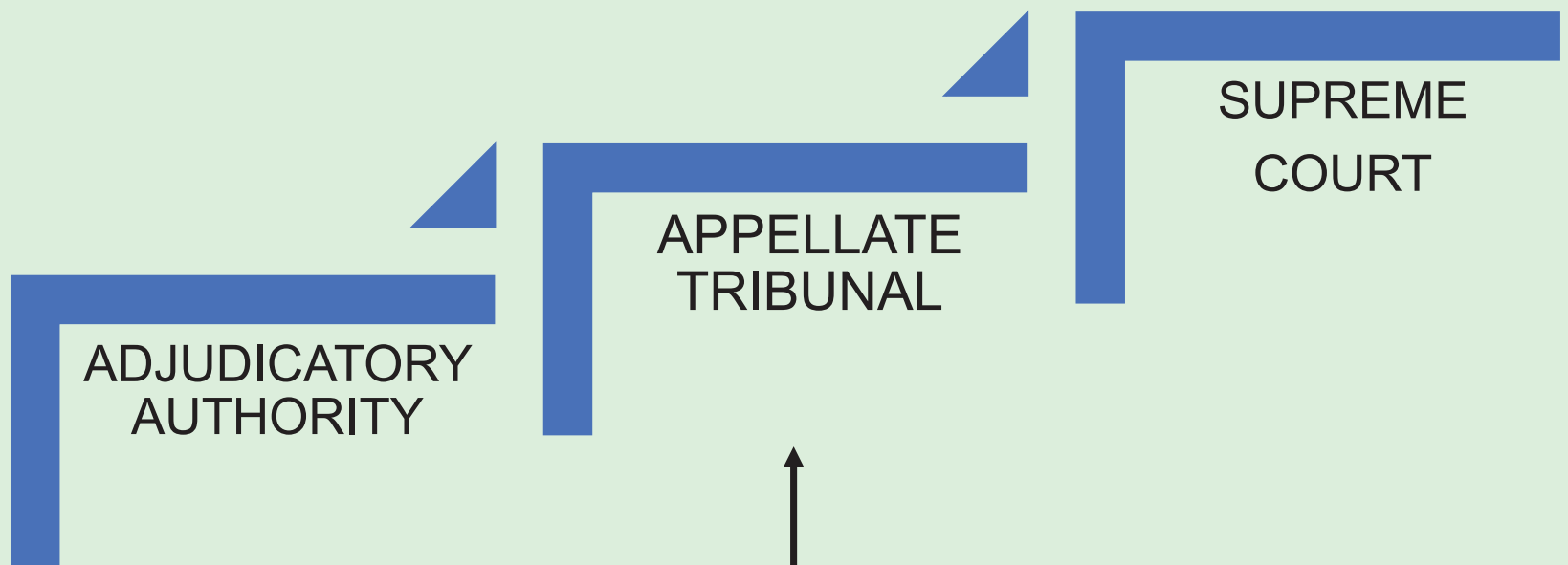


VEDHIK
IAS ACADEMY
The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE
BEST

INDIA'S TOP MOST CIVIL SERVANTS FOR COACHING





Provide for provisional attachment and confiscation of property of any person (for a period not exceeding 180 days) believed to be involved in the offence of money laundering practices.

PML (Amendment) Act, 2011

Provide for the transfer of cases of the Scheduled offences pending in a court (which had taken cognizance of the offence) to the Special Court for trial. In addition, on receiving such cases, the Special Court shall proceed to deal with it from the stage at which it was committed.

PML (Amendment) Act, 2011

Provide for appeal against the orders of the Appellate Tribunal directly to the Supreme Court within 60 days from the communication of the decision or order of the Appellate Tribunal.



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:

Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office

Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:

Bobscoedu,

Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com