Emergency pension scheme – Madhya Pradesh

Why in news?

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The Madhya Pradesh government has recently put on hold the pensions of those who had been detained during the Emergency.

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What does the scheme contain?

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- Many persons were detained under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) and Defence of India Rules (DIR) during the Emergency Period (1975-77) for political or social reasons.
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- Hence, rules for the Loknayak Jaiprakash Narayan Nidhi were framed in 2008.
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- Under the scheme, individuals who had been detained in jail or police stations between June 25, 1975, and March 21, 1977, for political and social reasons in Madhya Pradesh were made eligible for pensions.
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- Applicants were required to be domiciled in the state, and to submit proof of having spent time in jail under MISA or DIR.
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- Initially, the government verified jail and police records to crosscheck claims when applicants were unable to produce proof of detention.
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- Subsequently, applicants only had to get two beneficiaries of the scheme to attest that s/he was in jail or in police custody at the time.
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- Also, the rules were amended from time to time to increase the pension amount and to reduce the qualifying period of incarceration.
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- Over the period, anyone who was able to provide reasonable evidence of having spent even a day in jail during the relevant period were qualified for the pension.
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What was the modification made in the rules?

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- According to the rules framed in 2008, those who spent six months or more in jail got Rs 6,000 and those who had spent lesser time got half that amount.
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- In 2018, the then MP government passed the Madhya Pradesh Loktantra Senani Samman Adhiniyam to replace rules framed in 2008.
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- As per the modification, anyone who spent a month or more in jail during the Emergency is entitled to a monthly pension of Rs 25,000, and those who spent less than a month got Rs 15,000.
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- Widows of men detained during this period get half this amount.
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- While moving the legislation, the government put the expenditure of the scheme at Rs 40 crore.
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What is the stand taken by the present government?

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- The current government has only put the modified scheme on hold and hasn’t stopped the pensions altogether.
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- This is because the government wants to redesign the scheme and carry out a physical verification of beneficiaries.
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- The government has argued that there were audit objections because money in excess of budgetary allocation was being paid every year.
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- It also says that not every beneficiary is genuine, and even those detained for other crimes during the Emergency are benefiting at the cost of taxpayers.
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- Since the scheme is governed by law, the government can’t scrap it without

going through a legal process.
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- Thus, it is incumbent on the government to streamline the process in such a way that the genuine beneficiaries are not left out.
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Source: The Indian Express

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