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News: India and Egypt ties elevated to a ‘strategic partnership’

- India and Egypt **agreed to elevate their bilateral ties to a ‘strategic partnership’ that covers political, security, defence, energy and economic linkages.**

News: Padma and Gallantry awards

- Recently, the Padma and gallantry awards were declared to multiple awardees.

Padma Awards

- The Padma Awards are **announced annually on the Republic Day (26th January).**
- **Instituted in 1954**, it is one of the highest civilian honours of India.
- The Padma Awards were briefly **suspended twice**, from **July 1977 to January 1980** and from **August 1992 to December 1995**. Some of the recipients have refused or returned their conferments.

Objective

- The Award seeks to **recognize achievements in all fields of activities or disciplines where an element of public service is involved.**

The Awards are given in three categories:

- Padma Vibhushan (for exceptional and distinguished service),
- Padma Bhushan (distinguished service of higher-order) and
- Padma Shri (distinguished service).
- Padma Vibhushan is highest in the hierarchy of Padma Awards followed by Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

Disciplines

- The Awards are given in **various disciplines/ fields of activities**, viz.- art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service etc.
- **All persons without distinction of race, occupation, position or sex are eligible for these awards. However, Government servants including those working with PSUs, except doctors and scientists, are not eligible for these Awards.**
- The award is **normally not conferred posthumously**. However, in highly deserving cases, the Government could consider giving an award posthumously.
- **A higher category of Padma award can be conferred on a person only where a period of at least five years has elapsed since conferment of the earlier Padma award.** However, in highly deserving cases, a relaxation can be made by the Awards Committee.

Selection Process

- The Awards are conferred on the **recommendations made by the Padma Awards Committee, which is constituted by the Prime Minister every year.**
- The Padma Awards Committee is **headed by the Cabinet Secretary** and **includes Home Secretary, Secretary to the President and four to six eminent persons as members.** The recommendations of the committee are submitted to the Prime Minister and the President of India for approval.
- The awards are presented by the President of India usually in the month of March/April every year.
- The **total number of awards** to be given in a year (excluding posthumous awards and to NRI/foreigners/OCIs) **should not be more than 120.**
- The award **does not amount to a title and cannot be used as a suffix or prefix** to the awardees' name.

Who nominates the awardees?

- **Any citizen of India can nominate a potential recipient.**
- One can **even nominate one's own self.**
- **All nominations are to be done online** where a form is to be filled along with details of the person or the organization being nominated.

- An 800-word essay detailing the work done by the potential awardee is also to be submitted for the nomination to be considered.

Bharat Ratna

- Bharat Ratna is the highest civilian award of the country.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- It is treated on a different footing from Padma Award. The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President of India.
- The number of Bharat Ratna Awards is restricted to a maximum of three in a particular year.

Gallantry Awards

- Gallantry Awards have been instituted by the Government of India to honour the acts of bravery and sacrifice of the officers/personnel of the Armed Forces, other lawfully constituted Forces and civilians.
- These gallantry awards are announced twice in a year - first on the occasion of the Republic Day and then on the occasion of the Independence Day.

Gallantry Awards are classified into two Categories:

- **Gallantry in the Face of Enemy** (Param Vir Chakra (PVC) Mahavir Chakra (MVC) and Vir Chakra).
- **Gallantry Other than in the Face of Enemy** (Ashok Chakra, Kirti Chakra and Shaurya Chakra).
- Various level of bravery is awarded with these awards.
- **All the gallantry awards may be awarded posthumously.**
- **Ministry of Defence invites recommendations twice in a year from the Armed Forces and Union Ministry of Home Affairs for gallantry awards.**
- Recommendations are **invited normally in the month of August** for the awards to be announced on the occasion of the Republic Day and **in the month of March** for the awards to be announced on the occasion of the Independence Day.
- **In respect of the Armed Forces, a case for the gallantry award is initiated by the Unit and if found fit the same is forwarded to respective Services HQrs duly recommended by Commanders in chain, immediately after the act of gallantry is performed.**
- **Recommendations in respect of civilian citizens (other than Defence personnel) are received from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). MHA calls for recommendations (in respect of civilians) from all State/UT Governments,**

Central Ministries/ Departments, Central Armed Police Forces and Railway Protection Force etc.

- Recommendations received directly from private individuals, including VIP references are not accepted.
- In any case, the time limit for considering gallantry awards should not be beyond two calendar years from the date on which the act of gallantry is performed.
- Recommendations received from the Armed Forces and MHA are considered by the Central Honours & Awards Committee (CH&AC) comprising of Raksha Mantri, three Service Chiefs & Defence Secretary. Home Secretary is also member for the cases recommended by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Thereafter, recommendations of the CH&AC are submitted for approval of the Prime Minister and the President.
- After approval of the President, awards are announced on the occasion of the Republic Day and Independence Day.

Wartime Highest Gallantry Awards

Param Vir Chakra

- Param Vir Chakra is **India's highest military decoration** awarded for displaying distinguished acts of valour during wartime whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Maha Vir Chakra

- Maha Vir Chakra is the **second highest gallantry award** for acts of conspicuous gallantry in the presence of the enemy whether on land, at sea or in the air.

Vir Chakra

- Vir Chakra is the country's **third-highest wartime gallantry award** after Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra.

Peacetime Highest Gallantry Awards

Ashoka Chakra

- Ashoka Chakra is the **highest military award during peace time** for valour, courageous action or sacrifice.
- It is awarded for most conspicuous bravery or some act of daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice otherwise than in the face of the enemy.

Kirti Chakra

- Kirti Chakra is the **second highest peacetime gallantry award** and is awarded for valour, courageous action or self-sacrifice away from the field of battle.

Shaurya Chakra

- Shaurya Chakra is **awarded to the personnel of the armed forces for instances of extraordinary gallantry.**

Other Awards

Sena Medal

- Sena Medal is awarded for **acts of exceptional devotion to duty or courage in the Army.**

Nao Sena Medal

- Nao Sena Medal is awarded for individual acts of **exceptional devotion to duty or courage in the Navy.**

Vayu Sena Medal

- Vayu Sena Medal is awarded for individual acts of exceptional devotion to duty or **courage in the Air Force.**