New Delhi Municipal Committee Vs State of Punjab, etc. etc.

Civil Appeal No''s. 1388-90 of 1975.

Court: Supreme Court of India

Date of Decision: Dec. 19, 1996

Acts Referred:
Central Excises and Salt Act, 1944 â€" Section 3#Civil Procedure Code, 1908 (CPC) â€" Section 79#Constitution of India, 1950 â€" Article 133, 142, 239, 240, 241#General Clauses Act, 1897 â€" Section 3(58)

Citation: AIR 1997 SC 2847 : (1997) AIRSCW 2851 : (1997) 1 JT 40 : (1996) 9 SCALE 613 : (1997) 7 SCC 339 : (1996) 10 SCR 472 Supp : (1997) 4 Supreme 90

Hon'ble Judges: A. M. Ahmadii, C.J.; S.C. Sen, J; S.C. Agrawal, J; K.S. Paripoornan, J; J.S. Verma, J; B.P. Jeevan Reddy, J; B.N. Kirpal, J; B.L. Hansaria, J; A.S. Anand, J

Bench: Full Bench

Advocate: Ashok H. Desai, Attorney General, B. Sen, A.M. Singhvi, A.K. Ganguli and A.S. Nambiar, for the Appellant;

Final Decision: dismissed

Judgement

@JUDGMENTTAG-ORDER

1. Article 289(1) of the Constitution of India declares that the ""property and income of a State shall be exempt from Union taxation"". The question in this batch of appeals is whether the properties of the States situated in the Union

Territory of Delhi are exempt from property taxes levied under the municipal enactments in force in the Union Territory of Delhi. The Delhi High Court has taken the view that they are. That view is challenged in these appeals preferred by

the New Delhi Municipal Council and the Delhi Municipal Corporation.

2. Leave granted in the Special Leave Petitions.

3. Prior to 1911-12, a large part of the territory now comprised in the Union Territory of Delhi was a district of the Province of Punjab. By a Proclamation dated September 17, 1912, the Governor General took the said territory under

his immediate authority arid, management, to be administered as a separate Province to be known as the Province of Delhi. (This was in connection with the decision to shift the Capital from Calcutta to Delhi.) In the same year, the Delhi

Laws Act, 1912 (1912 Act) was enacted. It came into force on and with effect from the 1st day of October, 1912. Schedule-A to the Act defined the ""territory"" covered by the new Province. Sections 2 and 3 of the 1912 Act provided

inter alia that the creation of the new Province of Delhi shall not effect any change in the territorial application of any enactment. One of the Acts so applying to the territory comprised in the new Province of Delhi was the Punjab

Municipal Act, 1911.

4. In the year 1915, another Act called ""The Delhi Laws Act, 1915"" (1915 Act) was enacted. Under this enactment, certain areas formerly comprised in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh were included in and added to the

Province of Delhi with effect from 1st April, 1915. Section 2 of the 1915 Act also contained a saving clause similafr to Section 2 of the 1912 Act.

5. In the Constitution of India, 1950, as originally enacted, the First Schedule contained four categories of States, viz., Part "A", Part "B" Part "C" and Part D. Part "D" comprised only of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Chief

Commissioner"s Province of Delhi was one of the Part "C" States. By virtue of the Part "C" States (Laws) Act, 1950, the laws in force in the erstwhile Chief Commissioner"s Province of Delhi were continued in the Part "C" State of

Delhi. This Act came into force on the 16th day of April, 1950.

6.In the year 1951, the Parliament enacted the Government of Part "C" States Act, 1951. This Act contemplated that there shall be a legislature for each of the Part "C" States specified therein which included Delhi. Section 21 stated that

the legislature of a Part "C" State shall have the power to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List-II and List-Ill of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution. In the case of Delhi legislature, however, it was

provided that it shall not have power to make law with respect to matters specified therein including ""the Constitution and powers of municipal corporations and other local authorities, of improvement trusts and of water supply, drainage,

electricity, transport and other public utility authorities in Delhi or in New Delhi"". Section 22 provided that any law made by the legislature of a Part "C" State shall, to the extent of repugnancy with any law made by Parliament, whether

enacted earlier or later, be void. It is necessary to notice the two distinctive features of the legislatures of Part "C" States; not only were they created under an Act made by Parliament, the laws made by them even with respect to any of

the matters enumerated in List-II were subject to any law made by the Parliament. In case of repugnancy, the law made by legislature was to be of no effect so far Delhi is concerned, the Parliament placed certain additional fetters

referred to in Section 26.

7. It is stated that in the year 1952, a legislature was created for Delhi which functioned upto November 1,1956 when the Government of Part "C" States Act, 1951 was repealed by Section 130 of the States" Reorganisation Act, 1956.

While repealing the Government of Part "C" States Act, 1951, the States" Reorganisation Act, 1956 did not provide for the creation or continuance of legislatures for the part "C" States. The legislature constituted for Delhi thus came to

an end.

8. By Constitution Seventh (Amendment) Act, 1956, some of the Part "C" States cased to exist, having been merged in one the other State while some others continued-designated as Union territories. The categorisation of the States

into Part A, B, C and D was done away with. In its place, the First Schedule came to provide only two categories, viz., ""(i) the States"" and ""(ii) the Union territories"". The Seventh (Amendment) Act specified six Union territories, viz.,

Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Laccadive Minicoy and Amindivi Islands. Delhi thus became a Union territory. With the inclusion of Goa and other former Portuguese territories in the

Union, the number of Union territories grew to eight by 1962. In that year, the Constitution Fourteenth (Amendment) Act, 1962 was enacted. Pondicherry was added as a Union territory at S1. No. 9. More important, the said

Amendment Act introduced Article 239-A. The new Article provided that ""Parliament may by law create for any of the Union territories of Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry, a body, whether

elected or partly nominated, and partly elected to function as a legislature for the Union territory, or a council of ministers, or both with such constitutional powers and functions in each case, as may be specified in the law"" (Emphasis

added). It is significant to note that the said article did not provide for creation of a legislature or a council of ministers, as a case may be, for the Union Territory of Delhi.

9. Pursuant to Article 239-A, Parliament enacted the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963 (1963 Act). Obviously, this Act applied only to those Union territories as were referred to in Article 239-A. It did not apply to Delhi. This

Act provided for creation of Legislative Assemblies for the Union territories mentioned in Article 239-A and the extent of their legislative power. Section 3(1) declared that ""there shall be a Legislative Assembly for each Union territory

whereas Section 18(1) provided that ""subject to the provisions of this Act, the Legislative Assembly of a Union territory may make laws for the whole or any part of the Union territory with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the

State List or the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution insofar as any such matter is applicable in relation to Union territories."" Sub-section (2) of Section 18 read with Section 21, however, conferred overriding

power upon the Parliament to make any law with respect to any matter for a Union territory or any part thereof. In case of inconsistency between a Law made by Parliament and a law made by the legislature of any of these Union

territories, the latter was to be void to the extent of repugnancy, notwithstanding whether the Parliamentary law was earlier or subsequent in point of time. Section 19 of the Act exempted the property of the Union from all taxes imposed

by or under any law made by the Legislative Assembly of a Union territory except insofar as is permitted by a law made by a Parliament.

10. By the Constitution Sixty Ninth (Amendment) Act, 1991, Article 239-AA was introduced in Part VIII of the Constitution. This Article re-named the Union Territory of Delhi"" as the ""National Capital Territory of Delhi"" and provided

that there shall be a Legislative Assembly for such National Capital territory. The Legislative Assembly so created was empowered by Clause (3) of the said Article ""to make laws for the whole or any part of the National Capital

Territory with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State List or in the Concurrent List, insofar as any such matter is applicable to. Union territories, except matters with respect to Entries 1, 2 and 18 of the State List and

Entries 64, 65 and 66 of the List insofar as they relate to the said Entries 1, 2 and 18"". Clause (3) further provided that the power conferred upon the Legislative Assembly of Delhi by the said Article shall not derogate from the powers of

the Parliament ""to make laws with respect to any matter for a Union territory or any part thereof. It further provided that in the case of repugnancy, the law made by Parliament shall prevail, whether the Parliamentary law is earlier or later

to the law made by the Delhi Legislative Assembly. The parliament is also empowered to amend, vary or repeal any law made by the Legislative Assembly. Article 239-AA came into force with effect from February 1, 1992. Pursuant to

the article, the Parliament enacted the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991. It not only provided for Constitution of a Legislative Assembly but also its powers as contemplated by Article 239-AA. This Act too

came into force on February 1, 1992. The subordinate status of the Delhi Legislature is too obvious to merit any emphasis.

11. So far as the MUNICIPAL LAWS GOVERNING THE TERRITORY OF DELHI is concerned, the following is the position : by Delhi Law Act, 1912, referred to supra, the Punjab Municipal Act continued to govern the territory

comprised in the Chief Commissioner''s Province of Delhi. The Act is stated to have been extended to Part "C" State of Delhi under a notification issued under Part "C" State (Laws) Act, 1950. In the impugned judgment, the High Court

has stated the following facts:

The various Punjab enactments which were then in force in the territory of Delhi continued to be in force by virtue of the Delhi Laws Act of 1912 and later by the Part C States Laws Act of 1950 and the Union Territories Laws Act of

1950. The application and the later extension of this law to the Union Territory of Delhi was, therefore, not by the authority of the State, Legislature but that of the Central Legislature, that is, the Central Legislature under the Government

of India Act followed by the Central legislature under the Constitution of India, that is, the Parliament of India.... The Delhi Laws Act 1912, the Union Territories (Laws) Act, 1950 as indeed the Part C States (Laws) Act, 1950 were all

central statutes and when a provincial Act or an Act which may be treated as a provincial Act or State Act was extended to a territory by a particular legislature, it would be deemed to be the enactment of such a legislature and this

principle is clearly recognised by the Supreme Court in the case of 284943 ... It is thus clear that on the extension of the Act to the Union Territory of Delhi by the various Central Legislative enactments referred to above, it became a

Central Act or an Act of Parliament as if made by virtue of power of Parliament to legislate for the Union Territory of Delhi by virtue of Clause (4) of Article 246 of the Constitution of India.

12. The correctness of the above factual statement has not been disputed by anyone before us. Indeed, the contention of Sri P.P. Rao, who led the argument on behalf of the respondents-State governments was to the same effect. He

contended that inasmuch as the Punjab Municipal act has been extended to Part "C" State of Delhi under the Part "C" State (Laws) Act, 1950 with effect from April, 16, 1950, it is a post-constitutional enactment made by Parliament

and hence the taxes levied thereunder constitute Union taxation. He placed strong reliance upon decision in 284943 and also certain observations in 280547) in that behalf. It is obvious that this was also the case of the State governments

before the Delhi High Court. We, therefore, proceed on the basis that the Punjab Municipal Act was extended to Part "C" State of Delhi under and by virtue of the Part "C" State (Laws) Act, 1950 which came into force on April 16,

1950.

13. By virtue of the Constitution Seventh (Amendment) Act, 1956, the Part "C" State of Delhi was designated as a Union Territory. The Punjab Municipal Act continued to govern the Union Territory of Delhi. In the year 1957, the

Parliament enacted the Delhi Municipality Act, 1957. The First Schedule to the Act specified the boundaries of New Delhi within which area the Punjab Municipal Act continued to be in force. The remaining area was designated as the

Delhi Municipal Corporation area and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 was made applicable to it. In the year 1994, the Parliament enacted the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 repealing Punjab Municipal Act, 1911.

This Act has been brought into force with effect from May 25, 1994. It is, however, confined in its application to the area comprised in the New Delhi Municipal Council. Delhi and New Delhi are thus governed by different municipal

enactments. The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and New Delhi Municipal Council Act are, without a doubt, post-constitutional laws enacted by Parliament.

PARTY-II

14. Article 1(1) of the Constitution of India declares that India, i.e., Bharat, shall be a Union of States. As amended by the Constitution Seventh (Amendment) Act, Clause (2) and (3) of Article 1 read:

(2) The States and the territories thereof shall be as specified in the First Schedule.

(3) The territory of India shall comprise-

(a) the territories of State;

(b) the Union territories specified in the First Schedule; and

(c) such other territories as may be acquired.

15. Clause (30) in Article 366 defines the ""Union territory"" in the following words:

"Union Territory" means any Union Territory specified in the First Schedule and includes any other territory comprised with the territory of India but not specified in that Schedule.

16. The expression ""State"" is not defined in the Constitution. It is defined in the General Clauses Act, 1897 which is made applicable to the interpretation of the Constitution by Article 367. As on the date of the commencement of the

Constitution, Clause (58) in Section 3 of the General Clause Act defined ""State"" in the following words

(58). "State" shall mean a Part A State, a Part B State or a Part C State.

17. The said definition was amended by the Adaptation of Laws Order No. 1 of 1956 issued by the President in exercise of the power conferred upon him by Article 372A of the Constitution introduced by the Constitution Seventh

(Amendment) Act. The amended definition reads thus:

(58) "States"-

(a) as respects any period before the commencement of the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1958), shall mean a Part A State, a Part B State or a Part C State; and

(b) as respects any period after such commencement, shall mean : a State specified in the First Schedule to the Constitution and shall include a Union territory.

The definitions in the General Clauses Act, 18. it is necessary to remember, have to be read and applied subject to the opening words in Section 3, viz., ""unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context....

18. Part-XI of the Constitution contains provisions governing relations between the Union and the States. This part is divided into two chapters, viz., Chapter-I containing Articles 245 to 255 and Chapter-II containing Article 256 to 263,

Chapter-I carries the title ""Legislative relations"" while Chapter-II is called ""Administrative relations"". Article 245, which carries the heading/marginal note ""The extent of laws made by Parliament and the Legislature of States"" contains two

clauses. Clause (1) says that subject to the provisions of this Constitution, Parliament may make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India and the legislature of a State may make laws for the whole or any part of the State.

Article 246 is of crucial relevance herein and must, therefore, be set out in its entirety:

246. Subject-matter of laws made by Parliament and by the Legislature of States. - (1) Notwithstanding anything in Clauses (2) and (3), Parliament has exclusive power to make laws with respect to any of the matter enumerated in List I

of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution referred to as the "Union List").

(2) Notwithstanding anything in Clause (3), Parliament, and, subject to Clause (1) the Legislature of any State...also, have power to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List III in the Seventh Schedule to the

Constitution referred to as the "Concurrent List").

(3) Subject to Clauses (1) and (2), the Legislature of any State...has exclusive power to make law for such State or any Part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List II in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution

referred to as the "State List").

(4) Parliament has power to make laws with respect to any matter for any of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List.

(emphasis added)

19. It is relevant to point out that in Clauses (2) and (3), as originally enacted-and upto the Seventh (Amendment) Act-the expression ""State"" was followed by the words ""specified in Part-A or Part-B of the First Schedule"". Similarly, the

words, ""in the State"" in Clause (3), were followed by the words ""in Part-A or Part-B of the First Schedule"". In other words, Clauses (2) and (3) of Article 246 expressly excluded Part "C" and Part "D" States from their purview. The

position is no different after the Constitution Seventh (Amendment) Act, which designated the Part-C States as Union territories. They ceased to be States. As rightly pointed out by a Constitution Bench of this Court in T.M. Kanniyan,

the context of Article 246 excludes Union territories from the ambit of the expression ""State"" occurring therein. As a matter of fact, this is true of Chapter-I of Part-XI of the Constitution as a whole. It may be remembered that during the

period intervening between The Constitution Seventh (Amendment) Act, 1956 and The Constitution Fourteenth (Amendment) Act, 1962, there was no provision for a legislature for any of the Union territories. Article 239-A in Part-VII-

The Union Territories""-(which before the Seventh Amendment was entitled ""The States in Part-C of the First Schedule"") introduced by Constitution Fourteenth (Amendment) Act did not itself create a legislature for Union territories; it

merely empowered the Parliament to create them for certain specified Union territories (excluding Delhi) and to confer upon them such powers as the Parliament may think appropriate. Thus, the legislatures created for certain Union

territories under the 1963 Act were not legislatures in the sense Used in Chapter-Ill of Part-IV of the Constitution, but were mere creatures of the Parliament-some sort of subordinate legislative bodies. They were unlike the legislature

contemplated by Chapter-III of Part-VI of the Constitution which are supreme in the field allotted to them, i.e., in the field designated by List-II of the Seventh Schedule. The legislatures created by the 1963 Act for certain Union

territories owe their existence and derive their powers from the Act of the Parliament and are subject to its over-riding authority. In short, the State legislatures contemplated by Chapter-I of Part-XI are the legislatures of State referred to

in Chapter-III of Part-VI and not the legislatures of Union territories created by the 1963 Act. Union territories are not States for the purposes for Part-XI (Chapter-I) of the Constitution.

20. Article 248 confers the residuary legislative power upon the Parliament. The said power includes the power to make any law imposing a tax not mentioned in either List-II or List-III. Articles 249, 250, 252 and 357 confer upon the

Parliament power to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in List-II in certain exceptional situations, which may, for the sake of convenience, be called a case of ""substitute legislation"". It would be enough to refer to the marginal

headings of these four Articles. They read:

249. Power of Parliament to legislate with respect to a matter in the State in the. national interest.

250. Power of Parliament to legislate with respect to any matter in the State List if a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation.

252. Power of Parliament to legislate for two or more States by consent and adoption of such legislation by any other State.

357. Exercise of legislative powers under Proclamation issued under Article 356.

21. We may now set out ARTICLES 285 AND 289:

285. Exemption of property of the Union from State taxation.- (1) The property of the Union shall, save in so far as Parliament may by law otherwise provide, be exempt from all taxes imposed by a State or by any authority within a

State.

(2) Nothing in Clause (1) shall, until Parliament by law otherwise provides, prevent any authority within a State from levying any tax on any property of the Union to which such property was immediately before the commencement of this

Constitution liable or treated as liable, so long as that tax continues to be levied in that State.

289. Exemption of property and income of a State from Union taxation.-(1) The property and income of a State shall be exempt from Union taxation.

(2) Nothing in Clause (1) shall prevent the Union from imposing or authorising the imposition of, any tax to such extent, if any, as Parliament may by law provide in respect of the trade or business of any kind carried on by, or on behalf

of, the Government a State, or any operations connected therewith, or any property used or occupied for the purposes of such trade or business or any income accruing in connection therewith.

(3) Nothing in Clause (2) shall apply to any trade or business, or to any class of trade or business, which Parliament may by law declare to be incidental to the ordinary functions of Government.

22. A Federation Pre-supposes two coalescing units : the Federal Government/center and the States/Provinces. Each is supposed to be supreme in the sphere allotted to it/them. Power to tax is an incident of sovereignty. Basic premise is

that one sovereign cannot tax the other sovereign. Articles 285 and 289 manifest this mutual regard and immunity but in a manner peculiar to our constitutional scheme. While the immunity created in favour of the Union is absolute, the

immunity created in favour of the States is a qualified one. We may elaborate : Article 285 says that ""the property of the Union shall...be exempt from all taxes imposed by a State or by any authority within a State"" unless, of course,

Parliament itself permits the same and to the extent permitted by it. (Clause (2) of Article 285 saves the existing taxes until the Parliament otherwise provides, but this is only a transitional provision.) The ban, if it can be called one, is

absolute and emphatic in terms. There is no way a State legislature can levy a tax upon the property of the Union. So far as Article 289 is concerned, the position is different. Clause (1), had it stood by itself, would have been similar to

Clause (1) of Article 285. It says that ""the property-and income-of a State shall be exempt from Union taxation"". But it does not stand alone. It is qualified by Clause (2) and Clause (3) is an exception to Clause (2). But before we refer

to Clause (2), a word with respect to the meaning and ambit of the expression ""property"" occurring in this Article. Expression ""Property"" is wide enough to take in all kinds of property. In Re. the Bill to amend Section 20 of the Sea

Customs Act, 1878 and Section 3 of the Central Excises and Salt Act, 1944 280738 all the learned Judges (both majority and dissenting) were agreed that the expression must be understood in its widest sense. There is no reason to put

a restricted construction thereon. Indeed, there is no controversy about this proposition before us. Coming to Clause (2), it says that the ban imposed by Clause (1) shall not prevent the Union from imposing or authorising the imposition

of any tax to such extent, if any, as the Parliament may by law provide, in respect of (a) trade or business of any kind carried on by or on behalf of the Government of the State or (b) any operations connected with such trade or business

or (c) any property used or occupied for the purposes of such trade or business or (d) any income accruing or arising in connection with such trade or business. (The inspiration for this provision may perhaps be found in certain United

States"" decisions on the question of the power of the units of the federal polity to tax each others'' properties.) Clause (3) empowers the Parliament to declare, by law, which trade or business or any class of trades or businesses is

incidental to the ordinary functions of the Government, whereupon the trades/businesses so specified go out of the purview of Clause (2).

23. It would be appropriate at this stage to notice the ratio of two judgments of this Court dealing with Article 289. In Re. : Sea Customs Act, a Special Bench of nine learned Judges, by a majority, laid down the following propositions :

(a) Clause (1) of Article 289 provides for exemption of property and income of the States only from taxes imposed directly upon them; it has no application to indirect taxes like duties of excise and customs; (b) duties of excise and

customs are not taxes on property or income; they are taxes on manufacture/production of goods and on import/export of goods, as the case may be, arid hence, outside the purview of Clause (1) of Article 289. The other decision in

277244 is the decision of a Constitution Bench. The main holding in this case is that income of the A.P.S.R.T.C. is not the income of the State of Andhra Pradesh since the former is an independent legal entity and hence, Article 289(1)

does not avail it. At the same time, certain observations are made in the decision regarding the scheme of Article 289. It is held that Clause (2) is an exception or a proviso to Clause (1) and as such, whatever is included in Clause (2)

must be deemed to be included in Clause (1). In other words, the trading and business activities referred to in Clause (2) are included in Clause (1) and precisely for this reason the exception in Clause (2) was provided. Clause (3), it was

held, is an exception to Clause (2). In the words of the Constitution Bench:

The scheme of Article 289 appears to be that ordinarily, the income derived by a State both from government and nongovernmental or commercial activities shall be immune from income tax levied by the Union, provided, of course, the

income in question can be said to be income of the State. This general proposition flows from Clause (1).

Clause (2) then provides an exception and authorises the Union to impose a tax in respect of the income derived by the Government of a State from trade or business carried on by its, or on its behalf; that it to say, the income from trade

or business carried on by the Government of a State or on its behalf which would not have been taxable under Clause (1), can be taxed, provided a law is made by Parliament in that behalf. If Clause (1) had stood by itself, it may not

have been easy to include within its purview income derived by the State from commercial activities, but since Clause (2), in terms, empowers Parliament to make a law levying a tax on commercial activities carried on by or on behalf of a

State^ the conclusion is inescapable that these activities were deemed to have been included in Clause (1) and that alone can be the justification for the words in which Clause (2) has been adopted by the Constitution. It is plain that

Clause (2) proceeds on the basis that but for its provision, the trading activity which is covered by it would have claimed exemption from Union taxation under Clause (1). That is the result of reading clauses (1) and (2) together.

Clause (3) then empowers Parliament to declare by law that any trade or business would be taken out of the purview of Clause (2) and restored to the area covered by Clause (1) by declaring that the said trade or business is incidental

to the ordinary functions of government. In other words, Clause (3) is an exception to the exception prescribed by Clause (2). Whatever trade or business is declared to be incidental to the ordinary functions of government, would cease

to be governed by Clause (2) and would then be exempt from Union taxation. That, broadly stated appears to be the result of the scheme adopted by the three clauses of Article 289.

PART - III

24. The crucial question arising in this batch of appeals pertains to the meaning of the expression ""Union taxation"" occurring in Article 289(1). According to the appellant-municipal corporations, the property taxes levied either by Punjab

Municipal Act, 1911, as extended to and applicable in the New Delhi Municipal Council area or by the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 applicable to the Delhi Municipal Corporation area do not fall within the ambit of the

expression ""Union taxation"". According to them, ""Union taxation"" means levy of any of the taxes mentioned in the Union List (List-I in the Seventh Schedule to the constitution). May be, it may also take in levy of Stamp duties (which is

the only taxation entry in the Concurrent List) by Parliament, but by no stretch of imagination, they contend, can levy of any tax provided in the State List (List-II in the Seventh Schedule) can be characterised as Union taxation. Merely

because the Parliament levies the tax provided in List-II, such taxation does not amount to Union taxation. These are many situations where the Parliament is empowered by Constitution to make laws with respect to matters enumerated

in List-II. For example, Articles 249, 250, 252 and 357 empower the Parliament to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in List-II in certain specified situations. If any taxes are levied by Parliament while legislating under any of

the above articles, such taxation cannot certainly be termed as ""Union taxation"". It would still be State taxation. The levy of taxation by Parliament within the Union territories is of a similar nature. Either because the Union territory has no

legislature or because the Union territory has a legislature but the Parliament chooses to act in exercise of its over-riding power, the taxes levied by a Parliament enactment within such Union territories would not be Union taxation. It is

relevant to notice, the learned Counsel contend, that the legislatures of the Union territories referred to in Article 239-A as well as the legislature of Delhi created by Article 239-AA are empowered to make laws with respect to any of the

matters enumerated in List-II and List-III of the Seventh Schedule, just like any other State legislature; any taxes levied by these legislatures cannot certainly be characterised as ""Union taxation"". Merely because the Parliament has been

given an over-riding power to make a law with respect to matter enumerated even in List-II, in supersession of the law made by the legislature of the Union territory, it does not follow that the law so made is any the less a law belonging

to the sphere of the State. The test in such matters-it is contended-is not who makes the law but to which matter in which List does the law in question pertain. Clause (4) of Article 246 specifically empowers the Parliament to make laws

with respect to any matter enumerated in List-II in the case of Union territories. This shows that even the said clause recognises the distinction between List-I and List-II in the Seventh Schedule, it is submitted.

25. The learned Attorney General appearing for the Union of India supported the contentions of the appellants-municipal corporations.

26. On the other hand, the contentions of the learned Counsel for the respondents are to the following effect : a Union territory is not a ""State"" within the meaning of Article 246. Even prior to the Seventh (Amendment) Act, Part "C"

States, or for that matter Part-D States, were not within the purview of the said Article. The division of the legislative powers provided by Clauses (1), (2) and (3) of Article 246 has no relevance in the case of a Union Territory. Union

territory, as the name itself indicates, is a territory belonging to Union. A Union territory has no legislature as contemplated by Part-VI of the Constitution. A Union territory may have a legislature or may not. Even if it is bestowed with

one, it is not by virtue of the Constitution but by virtue of a Parliamentary enactments, e.g., Government of Part "C" States Act, 1951 (prior to November 1, 1956) and Government of Union Territories Act, 1963. Even the legislature

provided for Delhi by Article 239-AA of the Constitution with effect from February 1, 1992 is not a legislature like that of the States governed by Part-VI of the Constitution. Not only the powers of the legislature are circumscribed by

providing that such legislature cannot make laws with reference to certain specified entries in List-II but any law made by it even with reference to a matter enumerated in the State List is subject to the law made by Parliament. In any

event, the position obtaining in Delhi after February 1, 1992 is not relevant in these appeals since these appeals pertain to a period anterior to the said date. The Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 (as extended and applied to the Union

Territory of Delhi by Part "C" States (Laws Act) and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 are Parliamentary laws enacted under and by virtue of the legislative power vested in Parliament by Clause (4) of Article 246. The taxes

levied by the said enactments constitute ""Union taxation"" within the meaning of Article 289(1) and hence, the properties of the States in the Union Territory of Delhi are exempt there from. Reliance is placed upon the majority opinion in

Re. : Sea Customs Act in support of the above propositions. It is submitted that there are no reasons to take a different view now.

27. On a consideration of rival contentions, we are inclined to agree with the respondents-States. The States put together do not exhaust the territory of India. There are certain territories which do not from part of any State and yet are

the territories of the Union. That the States and Union territories are different entities, is evident from Clause (2) of Article 1 indeed from the entire scheme of the Constitution. Article 245(1) says that while Parliament may make laws for

the whole or any part of the territory of India, the legislature of a State may make laws for the whole or any part of the State. Article 1(2) read with Article 245(1) shows that so far as the Union territories are concerned, the only law-

making body is the Parliament. The legislature of a State cannot make any law for a Union territory; it can make laws only for that State. Clauses (1), (2) and (3) of Article 246 speak of division of legislative powers between the

Parliament and State legislatures. This division is only between the Parliament and the State legislatures, i.e., between the Union and the States. There is no division of legislative powers between the Union and Union territories. Similarly,

there is no division of powers between States and Union territories. So far as Union territories are concerned, it is Clause (4) of Article 246 that is relevant. It says that the Parliament has power to make laws with respect to any matter

for any part of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List. Now, the Union territory is not included in the territory of any State. If so, Parliament is the only law-

making body available for such Union territories. It is equally relevant to mention that the Constitution, as originally enacted, did not provide for a legislature for any of the Part "C" States (or, for that matter, Part "D" States). It is only by

virtue of the Government of Part "C" States Act, 1951 that some Part "C" States including Delhi got a legislature. This was put an end to by the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. In 1962, the Constitution Fourteenth (Amendment) Act

did provide for creation/constitution of legislatures for Union territories (excluding, of course, Delhi) but even here the Constitution did not itself provide for legislatures for those Part "C" States; it merely empowered the Parliament to

provide for the same by making a law. In the year 1991, the Constitution did provide for a legislature for the Union Territory of Delhi (National Capital Territory of Delhi) by Sixty-Ninth (Amendment) Act (Article 239-AA) but even here

the legislature so created was not a full fledged legislature nor did have the effect of-assuming that it could-lift the National Capital Territory of Delhi from Union territory category to the category of States within the meaning of Chapter-I

of Part XI of the Constitution. All this necessarily means that so far as the Union territories are concerned, there is no such thing as List-I, List-II or List-III. The only legislative body is Parliament-or a legislative body created by it. The

Parliament can make any law in respect of the said territories-subject, of course, to constitutional limitations other than those specified in Chapter-I of a Part-XI of the Constitution. Above all, Union Territories are not ""States"" as

contemplated by Chapter-I of Part-XI; they are the territories of the Union falling outside the territories of the States. Once the Union territory is a part of the Union and not part of any State, it follows that any tax levied by its legislative

body is Union taxation. Admittedly, it cannot be called ""State taxation""-and under the constitutional scheme, there is no third kind of taxation. Either it is Union taxation or State taxation. This is also the opinion of the majority in Re. : Sea

Customs Act. B.P. Sinha, CJ., speaking on behalf of himself, P.B. Gajendragadkar, Wanchoo and Shah, JJ.-while dealing with the argument that in the absence of a power in the Parliament to levy taxes on lands and buildings (which

power exclusively belongs to State legislatures, i.e., Item 49 in List-II), the immunity provided by Article 289(1) does not make any sense-observed thus:

It is true that List I contains no tax directly on property like List II, but it does not follow that the Union has no power to impose a tax directly on property under any circumstances. Article 246(4) gives power to Parliament to make laws

with respect to any matter for any part of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List. This means that so far as Union territories are concerned Parliament has

power to legislate not only with respect to items in list I but also with respect to items in List II. Therefore, so far as Union territories are concerned, Parliament has power to impose a tax directly on property as such. It cannot therefore

be said that the exemption of States" property from Union taxation directly on property under Article 289(1) would be meaningless as Parliament has no power to impose any tax directly on property. If a State has any property in any

Union territory that property would be exempt from Union taxation on property under Article 289(1). The argument therefore that Article 289(1) cannot be confined to tax directly on property because there is no such tax provided in List

I cannot be accepted.

28. Rajagopala Iyyengar, J. agreed with Sinha, CJ. on this aspect, as indeed on the main holding. The decision in Re. : Sea Customs Act has been rendered by a Bench of nine learned Judges. The decision of the majority is binding upon

us and we see no reason to take a different view. Indeed, the view taken by the majority accords fully with the view expressed by us hereinabove.

29. Now, so far as the analogy of laws made by Parliament under Article 249, 250, 252 and 357 are concerned, we think the analogy is odious. Articles 249, 250 and 357 are exceptional situations which call for the Parliament to step in

and make laws in respect of matters enumerated in List-II and which laws have effect for a limited period. Article 252 is a case where the State legislatures themselves invite the Parliament to make a law on their behalf. These are all

situations of what may be called ""Substitute legislation""-either because of a particular situation or because there is no legislature at a given moment to enact laws. As against these provisions, Clause (4) of Article 246 is a permanent feature

and laws made thereunder are laws made in the regular course.

30. In this connection, it is necessary to remember that all the Union Territories are not situated alike. There are certain Union territories (i.e., Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Chandigarh) for which there can be no legislature at all-as

on today. There is a second category of Union Territories covered by Article 239-A (which applied to Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Goa, Daman and Diu and Pondicherry-now, of course, only Pondicherry survives in this

category, the rest having acquired Statehood) which have legislatures by courtesy of Parliament. The Parliament can, by law, provide for Constitution of legislatures for these States and confer upon these legislatures such powers, as it

may think appropriate. The Parliament had created legislatures for these Union territories under the ""The Government of India Territories Act, 1963"", empowering them to make laws with respect to matters in List-II and List-III, but

subject to its over-riding power. The third category is Delhi. It had no legislature with effect from November 1, 1956 until one has been created under and by virtue of the Constitution Sixty-Ninth (Amendment) Act, 1991 which

introduced Article 239-AA. We have already dealt with the special features of Article 239-AA and need not repeat it. Indeed, a reference to Article 239-B read with Clause (8) of Article 239-AA shows how the Union Territory of

Delhi is in a class by itself but is certainly not a State within the meaning of Article 246 or Part-VI of the Constitution. In sum, it is also a territory governed by Clause (4) of Article 246. As pointed out by the learned Attorney General,

various Union territories are in different stages of evolution. Some have already acquired Statehood and some may be on the way to it. The fact, however, remains that those surviving as Union territories are governed by Article 246(4)

notwithstanding the differences in their respective setups-and Delhi, now called the ""National Capital Territory of Delhi"", it yet a Union territory.

31. It would be appropriate at this stage to refer to a few decisions on this aspect. In T.M. Kanniyan, a Constitution Bench speaking through Bachawat, J. had this to say:

Parliament has plenary power to legislate for the Union territories with regard to any subject. With regard to Union territories, there is no distribution of legislative power. Article 246(4) enacts that "Parliament has power to make laws

with respect to any matter for any part of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List." In 282963 it was pointed out that having regard to Article 367, the definition

of "State" in Section 3(58) of the General Clause Act, 1897 applies for the interpretation of the Constitution Unless there is any thing repugnant in the subject or context. Under that definition, the expression "State" as respects any period

after the commencement of the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 "shall mean a State specified in the First Schedule to the Constitution and shall include a Union territory"". But this inclusive definition is repugnant to the subject

and context of Article 246. There, the expression ''State'' means the States specified in the First Schedule. There is a distribution of legislative power between Parliament and the legislatures of the States. Exclusive power to legislate with

respect to the matters enumerated in the State List is assigned to the legislatures of the States established by Part VI. There is no distribution of legislative power with respect to Union territories. That is why Parliament is given power by

Article 246(4) to legislate even with respect to matters enumerated in the State List. If the inclusive definition of ''State'' in Section 3(158) of the General Clauses Act were to apply to Article 246(4), Parliament would have no power to

legislate for the Union territories with respect to matters enumerated in the State List and until a legislature empowered to legislate on those matters is created under Article 239-A for the Union territories, there would be no legislature

competent to legislate on those matters; moreover, for certain territories such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands no legislature can be created under Article 239A, and for such territories there can be no authority competent to legislate

with respect to matters enumerated in the State List. Such a construction is repugnant to the subject and context to Article 246. It follows that in view of Article 246(4), Parliament has plenary powers to make laws for Union territories on

all matters. Parliament can by law extend the income tax Act, 1961 to a Union territory with such modifications as it thinks fit. The President in the exercise of his powers under Article 240 can make regulations which have the same force

and effect as an Act of Parliament which applies to that territory. The President can therefore by regulation made under Article 240 extend the income tax Act, 1961 to that territory with such modifications as he thinks it.

The President can thus make regulations under Article 240 with respect to a Union territory occupying the same field on which Parliament can also make laws. We are not impressed by the argument that such overlapping of powers

would lead to a clash between the President and Parliament. The Union territories are centrally administered through the President acting through an administrator. In the cabinet system of Government the President acts on the advice of

the Ministers who are responsible to Parliament.... It is not necessary to make any distribution of income tax with respect to Union territories as those territories are centrally administered through the President.

(emphasis added)

32. We respectfully agree with the above statement of law.

33. We do not think it necessary to refer to or discuss the propositions laid down in 276407 holding that the amended definition of ""State"" in Clause (58) of Section 3 of the General Clauses Act applies to interpretation of Constitution by

virtue of Article 372A nor with the contrary proposition in the dissenting judgment of Bhargava, J. in 290531 It is enough to say that context of Article 246 indeed of Chapter-I in Part XI-excludes the application of the said amended

definition.

34. In Mithanlal (supra), T.L. Venkatrama Iyer, J., speaking for the Constitution Bench, while dealing with an argument based on Article 248(2) observed:

That Article has reference to the distribution of legislative powers between the center and the States mentioned in Parts A and B Under the three Lists in Schedule VII, and it provides that in respect of matters not enumerated in the Lists

including taxation, it is Parliament that has power to enact laws. It has no application to Part C States for which the governing provision is Article 246(4). Moreover, when a notification is issued by the appropriate Government extending

the law of a Part A State to a Part C State, the law so extended derives its force in the State to which it is extended from Section 2 of the Part C States (Laws) Act enacted by Parliament. The result of a notification issued under that

section is that the provisions of the law which is extended become incorporated by reference in the Act itself, and therefore a tax imposed thereunder is a tax imposed by Parliament. There is thus no substance in this contention.

(emphasis added)

35. To the same effect is the decision of a Division Bench in 293957

36. It is then argued for the appellants that if the above view is taken, it would lead to an inconsistency. The reasoning in this behalf runs thus : a law made by the legislature of a Union territory levying taxes on lands and buildings would be

State taxation"", but if the same tax is levied by a law made by the Parliament, it is being characterised as ""Union taxation""; this is indeed a curious and inconsistent position, say the learned Counsel for the appellants. In our opinion,

however, the very premise upon which this argument is urged is incorrect. A tax levied under a law made by a legislature of a Union territory cannot be called ""State taxation"" for the simple reason that Union territory is not a ""State"" within

the meaning of Article 246 (or for that matter, Chapter-I of Part-XI) or Part-VI or Articles 285 to 289.

37. Lastly, we may refer to the circumstance that Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 was enacted by Parliament. Hence, so far as the Delhi Municipal Corporation area is concerned, the taxes are levied under and by virtue of a

Parliamentary enactment. So far as the New Delhi Municipal Council area is concerned, the taxes were levied till 1994 under the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 as extended and applied by the Part "C" State (Laws) Act, 1950 enacted by

Parliament, it is held by this Court in Mithanlal that extension of an Act to an area has the same effect as if that Act has been made by the extending legislature for the area. The Court said:

Moreover, when a notification is issued by the appropriate Government extending the law of a Part A State to a Part C State, the law so extended derives its force in the State to which it is extended from Section 2 of the Part C States

(Laws) Act enacted by Parliament. The result of a notification issued under that section is that the provisions of the law which is extended become incorporated by reference in the Act itself, and therefore a tax imposed thereunder is a tax

imposed by Parliament. There is thus no substance in this contention.

38. It must accordingly be held that with effect from 1950, it is as if the property taxes are levied by a Parliamentary enactment. In 1994, of course, Parliament itself enacted the New Delhi Municipal Council Act (with effect form May

25, 1994) repealing the Punjab Municipal Act. Taxes levied under these enactments cannot but be Union taxation-Union taxation in a Union Territory.

39. For all the above reason, we hold that the levy of taxes on property by the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 (as extended to Part "C" States of Delhi by Part "C" States (Laws) Act, 1950), the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 and

the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 (both Parliamentary enactments) constitutes ""Union taxation"" within the meaning of Article 289(1).

PART - IV

40. The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 (as extended to the Union Territory of Delhi) and the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 (N.D.M.C. Act) specifically exempt the properties of the

Union from taxation. Section 119 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act is in terms of Article 285 of the Constitution. It reads:

119. Taxation of Union properties-(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the foregoing provisions of this Chapter, lands and buildings being properties of the Union shall be exempt from the property taxes specified in Section 114:

Provided that nothing in this Sub-section shall prevent the Corporation from levying any of the said taxes on such lands and buildings to which immediately before the 26th January 1950, they were liable or treated as liable, so long as that

tax continues to be levied by the Corporation on other lands and buildings.

41. Sub-section (3) of Section 61 is also in terms of Article 285 of the Constitution. It reads:

Nothing in this sub-section shall authorise the imposition of any tax which the provincial legislature has no power to impose in the Province under the Constitution-

Provided that a committee which immediately before the commencement of the Constitution was lawfully levying any such tax under this section as then in force may continue to levy such tax until provision to the contrary is made by

Parliament.

42. Sub-section (1) of Section 65 of the N.D.M.C. Act is again in the same terms as Article 285.

43. None of the above enactments provide any exemption in favour of the properties of a State. Section 115(4) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, Section 61 of the Punjab Municipal Act and Section 62 of the N.D.M.C. Act levy

property tax on all the properties within their jurisdiction. From the fact that properties of the Union have been specifically exempted in terms of Article 285 but the properties of the States have not been exempted in terms of Article 289

shows that so far as these enactments go, they purport to levy tax on the properties of the States as well. The State governments, it is equally obvious, are not claiming exemption form municipal taxation under any provision of the

concerned State enactment but only under and by virtue of Article 289 of the Constitution. They are relying upon Clause (1) of Article 289 which is undoubtedly in absolute terms. Clause (1) of Article 289 says, ""the property and income

of a State shall be exempt from Union taxation"". But Clause (1) does not stand alone. It is qualified by Clause (2)-which in turn is qualified by Clause (3). Where an exemption is claimed under Clause (1), we cannot shut our eyes to the

said qualifying clause and give effect to Clause (1) alone. In the decision in A.P.S.R.T.C., this Court has held that Clause (2) is an exception to Clause (1) and that Clause (3) is an exception to Clause (2). When a claim for exemption is

made under Clause (1) of Article 289, the Court has to examine and determine the field occupied by Clause (1) by reading Clauses (1) and (2) together. If there is a law made by Parliament within the meaning of Clause (2), the area

covered by that law will be removed from the field occupied by Clause (1). By way of analogy, we may refer to Sub-clause (f) of Clause (1) and Clause (5) of Article 19, which has been explained by a Special Bench of eleven Judges in

282049 in the following words : ""Clause (5) Article 19 and Clauses (1) and (2) of Article 31 prescribe restrictions upon State action, subject to which the right to property may be exercised"". But before we elaborate this aspect, it would

be appropriate to examine the meaning and scheme of Article 289 and the object underlying it.

44. Since Article 289 is successor to Section 155 of the Government of India Act, 1935-no doubt, with certain changes-it would be helpful to refer to and examine the purport and scope of Section 155 (as it obtained prior to its

amendment in 1947). We would also be simultaneously examining the scheme and purport of Article 289. It would be appropriate to read both Article 289 and Section 155 together:

289. Exemption of property and 155. (1) Subject as hereinafter income of a State from Union provided, the Government of a taxation-(1) The property and Province and the Ruler of a income of a State property and Federated State shall not be liable income of a State shall be exempt to Federal taxation in respect of from Union taxation. lands or buildings situate in British India or income accruing, arising or (2) Nothing in Clause (1) shall received in British India; prevent the Union from imposing, or authorising the imposition of, Provide that- any tax to such extent, if any, as Parliament may by law provide in a) where a trade or business of any respect of a trade or business of kind is carried on by or on behalf of any kind carried on by, or on the Government of a Province in behalf of, the Government of a any part of British India, outside State, or any operations that Province or by a Ruler in any connected therewith, or any part of British India, nothing in this property used or occupied for the sub-section shall exempt that purposes of such trade or Government or Ruler from any business, or any income accruing Federal taxation in respect of that or arising in connection there- trade or business, or any operations with. connected therewith, or any income arising in connection therewith, or (3)Nothing in Clause (2) shall any property occupied for the apply to any trade or business, purposes thereof; which Parliament may by law (b) nothing in this sub-section shall declare to be incidental to the exempt a Ruler from any Federal ordinary functions of taxation in respect of any lands, Government. buildings or income being his personal property or personal income. (2) Nothing in this Act affects any exemption from taxation enjoyed as of right at the passing of this Act by the Ruler of any Indian State in respect of any Indian Government securities issued before that date.

45. The first distinguishing feature to be noticed is that while Section 155 spoke of ""lands and buildings"" belonging to the Government of a Province situate in British India being exempt from Federal taxation (we are leaving out the portion

relating to Rulers of Acceding States/Federating States), Article 289(1) speaks of ""the property" of a State being exempt from Union taxation. The second material difference is between proviso (a) to Section 155(1) and Clause (2) of

Article 289 corresponding to it. Under the proviso, trade or business carried on by a Provincial government was excluded from the exemption provided in the main limb of Sub-section (1) whereas Clause (2) does not itself deny the

exemption to such trade or business; it merely enables the Parliament to make a law levying tax on such trade or business. This change has a certain background, which we shall refer to later. The third distinguishing feature between the

said proviso and Clause (2) is this : while the denial of exemption provided by the proviso was to the trade or business carried on by a Provincial government outside its territory, Clause (2) of Article 289 contains no such restrictive

words. The fourth distinguishing feature is the provision in Clause (3) of Article 289, which enables the Parliament to declare which trades/businesses are incidental to ordinary functions of government, in which event those

trades/businesses go out of the purview of Clause (2); no such provision existed in Section 155.

46. Even under the Government of India Act, 1935 the power to levy taxes on lands and buildings was vested in the Provincial legislatures alone. Federal legislature had no power to levy such taxes. If so, the question arises-why did the

British Parliament provide that the lands and buildings of a Provincial government situated in British India are exempt from Federal taxation. Since, no Federal tax could ever have been levied by the Federal legislature on lands or

buildings, is the exemption meaningless? This is the question which was also agitated before the learned Judges who answered the Presidential reference in Re. : Sea Customs Act. Sri P.P. Rao and other learned Counsel appearing for the

State governments submit that the said exemption is neither meaningless nor unnecessary. They submit that the language used in the main limb of Sub-section (1) of Section 155 was used advisedly'' to meet a specific situation. Their

explanation, as condensed by us in our words, is to the following effect:

even at the time of enactment and commencement of the Government of India Act, 1935, the area now comprised in the Union Territory of Delhi was comprised in the Chief Commissioner''s Province of Delhi; besides Delhi, there were

several other Chief Commissioner''s Provinces within British India; every Provincial government and almost every major native State had properties in Delhi for one or the other purpose; prior to the commencement of the 1935 Act, there

was no such thing as division of powers between the center and the Provinces; Provinces were mere administrative units; the concept of division of powers between the Federation (center) and its units (Provinces), i.e., the concept of a

Federation, broadly speaking, was introduced by the said Act for the first time; in such a situation, it was necessary that the mutual respect and regard between the center and the Provinces basic to a federal concept, is affirmed and given

due constitutional recognition; even before the enactment of the Delhi Laws Act, 1912, the Governor General in Council with the sanction and approbation of the Secretary of State for India, had, by proclamation published in Notification

No. 911 dated the 17th day of September, 1912, taken under his immediate authority and management, the territories mentioned in Schedule-A to the Act (the portion of the district of Delhi comprising the tehsil of Delhi and police

station of Mehrauli) which were formerly included in the Province of Punjab, with a view to provide for the administration thereof by a Chief Commissioner as a separate Province to be known as the Province of Delhi; it was the said

status which was affirmed by the Delhi Laws Act, 1912; Section 5 of the Government of India Act, 1935 made a clear distinction between the Provinces and the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces; while the Provinces were provided with

legislatures (Chapter-III of Part-III of the Act), the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces, governed by Part-IV of the Act, had no legislatures of their own; the only legislature for them was the Federal legislature; any tax levied in the Chief

Commissioner''s Province could have been levied only by the federal legislature or the Governor General, as the case may be; Section 99(1) of the Act provided that ""the Federal Legislature may make laws for the whole or any part of

British Indian or for any Federated State and a Provincial Legislature may make laws for the Province or for any part thereof; all this shows that the tax on lands or buildings in the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces including Delhi could

have been levied only by Federal legislature; Section 155(1) was meant to exempt the lands or buildings of Provincial governments from such federal taxation-it is submitted.

47. We find the above explanation cogent and acceptable. It fully explains the use of the words ""lands and buildings"" in Section 155(1) of the Act. We think it unnecessary to repeat the whole reasoning once again.

48. As against the words ""lands and buildings"" belonging to a Provincial Government in Section 155 of the Government of India Act, 1935, Article 289(1) uses a single expression ""Property"" and says that property of a State shall be

exempt from Union taxation. The expression ""Property"" is indubitably much wider. It takes in not only lands and buildings but all forms of property. While the Constituent Assembly debates do not throw any light upon the reason for this

change-from ""lands or buildings"" to ""property""-it is, in all probability, attributable to the large number of representations made by several Provincial governments to the Constituent Assembly that not merely the lands or buildings but any

and every trade and business carried on by a State government should equally be entitled to exemption. Sri B. Sen invited our attention to those representations and submitted that it is these representations which induced the Constituent

Assembly to draft Clause (2) of Article 289 in a manner different from proviso (a) to Section 155(1). Be that as it may, the fact remains that the expression ""property"" in Article 289(1) has to be given its natural and proper meaning. It

includes not only lands and buildings but all forms of property. The explanation offered by the learned Counsel appearing for the States, set out in extenso hereinabove, for the use of the words ""lands or buildings"" in Section 155(1) is

equally valid from Clause (1) of Article 289 insofar as it pertains to lands and buildings.

49. It must be remembered that both Section 155(1) and Article 289(1) exempt the income as well derived by a Provincial Government/State government from Union taxation. Both the property and income of the States are thus exempt

under Clause (1) of Article 289 subject, of course, to Clause (2) thereof.

50. Now what does Clause (2) of Article 289 say? It may be noticed that the language of the first proviso to Section 155 and of Clause (2) of Article 289 is practically identical (except for the two distinguishing features mentioned

hereinbefore). It would, therefore, suffice if we discuss the proviso. It says-omitting refrains to Princely States-that where a trade or business of any kind is carried on by or on behalf of the government of a Province in any part of British

India (outside that Province), nothing in Sub-section (1) shall exempt that Government from any Federal taxation in respect of that trade or business or any operations connected therewith or any income arising in connection therewith or

any property (i.e., lands and buildings) occupied for the purposes thereof. It is necessary to emphasise that the proviso to Section 155(1) which by its own force levied taxes upon the trading and business operations carried on by the

provincial governments did not either define the said expressions or specify which trading or business operations are subject to taxation. On this account, the proviso was not and could not be said to have been, ineffective or

unenforceable. It was effective till January 26, 1950. Clause (2) of Article 289 also similarly does not define or specify-nor does it require that the law made thereunder should so define or specify. It cannot be said that unless the law

made under and with reference to Clause (2) specifies the particular trading or business operations to be taxed, it would not be a law within the meaning of Clause (2). Coming back to the language of Clause (2), a question is raised, why

does the proviso speak of taxation in respect of trade or business when the main limb of Sub-section (1) speaks only of taxes in respect of lands or buildings and income? Is the ambit of proviso wider than the main limb? Is it an

independent provision of a substantive nature notwithstanding the label given to it as a proviso? Or is it only an exception? It is asked. We are, however, of the considered opinion that it is more important to give effect to the language of

and the intention underlying proviso than to find a label for it. It is clarificatory in nature without a doubt; it appears to be more indeed. It is concerned mainly with the ""income"" (of Provincial governments) referred to in the main limb of

Sub-section (1). It speaks of tax on the ""lands or buildings"" in that context alone, as we shall explain in the next paragraph. The idea underlying the proviso is to make it clear that the exemption of income of Provincial government

operates only where the income is earned or received by it as a government; it will not avail where the income is earned or received by the Provincial government on account of or from any trade or business carried on by it-that is a trade

or a business carried on with profit motive. In the light of the language of the proviso to Section 155 and Clause (2) of Article 289, it is not possible to say that every activity carried on by the government is governmental activity. A

distinction has to be made between governmental activity and trade and business carried on by the government, at least for the purposes of this clause. It is for this reason, we say, that unless an activity in the nature of trade and business

is carried on with a profit move, it would not be a trade or business contemplated by Clause (2). For example, mere sale of government properties, immovable or movable, or granting of leases and licences in respect of its properties

does not amount to carrying on trade or business. Only where a trade or business is carried on with a profit motive-or any property is used or occupied for the purpose of carrying on such trade or business-that the proviso (or for that

matter Clause (2) of Article 289 would be attracted. Where there is no profit motive involved in any activity carried on by the State government, it cannot be said to be carrying on a trade or business within the meaning of the

proviso/Clause (2), merely because some profit results from the activity.* We may pause here a while and explain why we are attaching such restricted meaning to be words ""trade or business"" in the proviso to Section 155 and in Clause

(2) of Article 289. Both the words import substantially the same idea though, ordinarily speaking, the expression ""business"" appears to be wider in its content. The expression, however, has no definite meaning; its meaning varies with the

context and several other factOrs. See 282608 and 288252 . As observed by Lord Diplock in Town Investments Limited v. Department of Environment (1977) 1 All. E.R. 813, ""the word ''business'' is an etymological chameleon; it suits

its meaning to the context in which it is found. It is not a term of legal art and its dictionary meanings, as Lindley, C.J. pointed out in Rolls v. Miller, embrace ''almost anything which is an occupation, as distinct from a pleasure-anything

which is an occupation or a duty which requires attention is a business...." ""Having regard to the context in which the words ""trade or business"" occur whether in the proviso to Section 155 of the Government of India Act, 1935 or in

Clause (2) of Article 289 of our Constitution they must be given, and we have given, a restricted meaning, the context being levy of tax by one unit of federation upon the income of the other unit, the manifold activities carried on by

governments under our constitutional scheme, the necessity to maintain a balances between the center and the States and so on.

51. Proviso (i) not only speaks of trade or business carried on by the Provincial governments (outside their respective territories) but also ""any operations connected therewith or any income arising in connection therewith or any property

occupied for the purposes thereof."" So far as operations connected with the trade or business is concerned, they naturally go along with the main trade or business. No difficulty is expressed by anyone on this count. Similarly, with respect

to any income arising in connection with such trade or business too, no difficulty is expressed since the income is an incident of the trade or business. Difficulty is, however, expressed regarding the other set of words ""or any property

occupied for the purposes thereof. The said words, in our opinion, mean that if any property, i.e., any land or building is occupied by the Provincial government for the purpose of any trade or business carried on by the Provincial

government, such land or building too loses the benefit of exemption contained in the main limb of Sub-section (1); it becomes liable to Federal taxation. To repeat, the central idea underlying the proviso is to remove the trading or

business operations from the purview of the main limb of Sub-section (1) of Section 155. Now, coming to Clause (2) of Article 289, position is the same with the two distinguishing features mentioned supra, viz., (a) under this clause,

removal of exemption is not automatic; it comes about only when the Parliament makes a law imposing taxes in respect of any trade or business carried on by a State government and all activities connected therewith or any property used

or occupied for the purposes of such business as also the income derived therefrom. If any property-whether movable or immovable-is used or occupied for the purpose of any such trade or business, it can be denied the exemption

provided by Clause (1) but this denial can be only by way of a law made by Parliament and (b) the exception contemplated by Clause (2) is not confined to trade and business carried on by a State outside its territory as was provided by

the first proviso to Section 155. Even the trade or business carried on by a State within its own territory can also be brought within the purview of the enactment made (by Parliament) in terms of the said clause.

52. Adverting to the matters before us, the question is whether the Parliament has made any law as contemplated by Clause (2) of Article 289? For, if no such law is made, it is evident, all the properties of State government in the Union

Territory of Delhi would be exempt from taxation. (Parliament has admittedly not made any law as contemplated by Clause (3) of Article 289.) We have observed hereinbefore that the claim of exemption put forward by State

governments in respect of their properties situated in N.D.M.C. and Delhi Municipal Corporation areas is founded-and can only be founded-on Article 289. The State invoke Clause (1) of the article but we are of the considered opinion

that Clause (1) cannot be looked at in isolation; it must be read subject to Clause (2). All the three clauses of Article 289 are parts of one single scheme. Hence, when a claim for exemption with reference to Clause (1) is made, one must

see what is the field on which it operates and that can be determined only by reading it along with Clause (2). The exemption provided by Article 289(1) is a qualified one-qualified by Clause (2), as explained hereinbefore. It is not an

absolute exemption like the one provided by Article 285(1). If there is a law within the meaning of Clause (2), the field occupied by Clause (1) gets curtailed to the extent specified in Clause (2) and the law made thereunder. It is,

therefore, necessary in this case to determine whether the Punjab Municipal Act, Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and N.D.M.C. Act are or can be deemed to be enactments within the meaning of Clause (2) of Article 289. These

enactments-and certainly the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and N.D.M.C. Act-are post-constitutional enactment. As stated hereinbefore, these enactments while specifically exempting the Union property in terms of Article 285, do

not exempt the properties of the States in terms of Article 289.* The omission cannot be said to be unintentional-particularly in the case of Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and N.D.M.C. Act. The intention is clear and obvious : the

enactments do not wish to provide for any exemption in favour of properties of the State situated within their respective jurisdictions. Taxes are levied on all properties within their jurisdiction (except the properties specifically exempted),

irrespective of who owns them and to what use they are put. In such a situation, the question is, how should they be understood? Two views can be taken: one that since the said enactments do not expressly purport to have been made

under and as contemplated by Clause (2) of Article 289, they should not be read and understood as laws contemplated by or within the meaning of the said Clause (2). The effect of this view would be that the properties of the State in

Union Territory of Delhi will be totally exempt irrespective of the manner of their use and occupation. In other words, the consequence would be that the relevant provisions of the said enactments would be ineffective and unenforceable

against all the properties held by the States in the Union Territory/National Capital Territory of Delhi, irrespective of the nature of their user or occupation. The second view is that since there is always a presumption of constitutionality in

favour of the statutes and also because the declaration of invalidity or inapplicability of a statute should be only to the extent the enactment is clearly outside the legislative competence of the legislative body making it or is squarely covered

by the ban or prohibition in question, the declaration of invalidity should not extend to the extent the enactments can be related to and upheld with reference to some constitutional provision, even though not cited by or recited in the

enactment. Similarly, the declaration of inapplicability should only be to the extent the law is plainly covered by the ban or prohibition, as the case may be. What is not covered by the constitutional bar should be held to be applicable and

effective. In our respectful opinion, the latter view is consistent with the well-known principles of constitutional interpretation and should be preferred. We may pause here and explain our view-point. If the law had expressly stated that it

is a law made under and with reference to Clause (2) of Article 289, no further question would have arisen. The only question is where it does not say so,* can its validity or applicability be sustained with reference to Clause (2). In our

considered opinion, it should be so sustained, even though it may be that the appellant-corporations have not chosen to argue this point specifically. As would be evident from some of the decisions referred to hereinafter, the fact that a

party or a government does not choose to put forward an argument cannot be a ground for the court not to declare the correct position in law. The appellants are saying that all the properties of the States are not exempt because the

taxes levied by them do not constitute ""Union taxation"" within the meaning of Clause (1) of Article 289. We have not agreed with them. We have held that the taxes levied by the aforesaid enactments do constitute, ""Union taxation"" within

the meaning of Clause (1) of Article 289 and that by virtue of the exemption provided by Clause (1), taxes are not leviable on State properties. In view of the fact that Clauses (1) and (2) of Article 289 go together, form part of one

scheme and have to be read together, we cannot ignore the operation and applicability of Clause (2), at the same time. Reference to a few decisions would bear out our view. In 281675 Fazl Ali, J. stated : ""...it is the accepted doctrine of

the American Courts, which I consider to be well-founded on principle, that the presumption is always in favour of the constitutionality of an enactment, and the burden is upon him who attacks it to show that there has been a clear

transgression of the constitutional principles"". In 284595 Mudholkar, J., speaking for the Constitution Bench, observed : ""Were the validity of a law made by a competent legislature is challenged in a Court of law, that Court is bound to

presume in favour of its validity. Further, while considering the validity of the law the court will not consider itself restricted to the pleadings of the State and would be free to satisfy itself whether under any provision of the Constitution the

law can be sustained."" In 282782 , the Constitution Bench considered the question whether a rule made by the Government of Kerala is violative of the right conferred upon the minorities by Article 30. It was held:

In that view of the matter the Rule in question its wide amplitude sanctioning the withholding of permission for admission of girl students in the boys minority school is violative of Article 30. If so widely interpreted it crosses the barrier or

regulatory measures and comes in the region of interference with the administration of the institution, a right which is guaranteed to the minority under Article 30. The Rule, therefore, must be interpreted narrowly and is held to be

inapplicable to a minority educational institution in a situation of the kind with which we are concerned in this case. We do not think it necessary or advisable to strike down the Rule as a whole but do restrict its operation and make it

inapplicable to a minority educational institution in a situation like the one which arose in this case.

53. Reference may also be made to another Constitution Bench decision in 284187 The following observations in Para 26 are apposite:

The deponents of the affidavits filed into Court may speak for the parties on whose behalf they swear to the statements. They do not speak for the Parliament. No one may speak for the Parliament and Parliament is never before the

Court. After Parliament has said what it intends to say, only the Court may say what the Parliament meant to say. None else. Once a statute leaves Parliament House, the Court''s is the only authentic voice which may echo (interpret) the

Parliament. This the Court will do with reference to the language of the statute and other permissible aids. The executive Government may place before the Court their understanding of what Parliament has said or intended to say or what

they think was Parliament''s object and all the facts and circumstances which in their view led to the legislation. When they do so, they do not speak for Parliament. No Act of Parliament may be struck down because of the understanding

or misunderstanding of Parliamentary intention by the executive government or because their (the Government''s) spokesmen do not bring out relevant circumstances but indulge in empty and self-defeating affidavits. They do not and they

cannot bind Parliament. Validity of legislation is not be judged merely by affidavits filed on behalf of the State, but by all the relevant circumstances which the Court may ultimately find and more especially by what may be gathered from

what the legislature has itself said.

54. Lastly, we may quote the pertinent propositions enunciated in 282331 to the following effect:

(b) that there is always a presumption in favour of the Constitutionality of an enactment and the burden is upon him who attacks it to show that there has been a clear transgression of the constitutional principles;

(e) that in order to sustain the presumption of constitutionality the Court may take into consideration matters of common knowledge, matters of common report, the history of the times and assume every state of facts which can conceived

existing at the time legislation; and....

These are well-settled propositions. Applying them, it must be held that the aforesaid Municipal Laws are inapplicable to the properties of State governments to the extent such properties are governed and saved by Clause (1) of Article

289 and that insofar as the properties used or occupied for the purpose of a trade or business carried on by the State government (as explained hereinbefore) are concerned, the ban in Clause (1) does not avail them and the taxes thereon

must be held to be valid and effective. It may be reiterated that the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 and the N.D.M.C. Act, 1994 axe post-constitutional enactments and that the Punjab Municipal Act too must be deemed to be a

post-constitutional enactment for the reasons given hereinabove. It must, therefore, be held that the levy of property taxes by the said enactments is valid to the extent it relates to lands and buildings owned by State governments and used

or occupied for the purposes of any trade or business carried on by such State government. In other words, the levy must be held to be invalid and inapplicable only to the extent of those lands and buildings which are not used or

occupied for the purposes of any trade or business carried on by the State government, as explained hereinbefore. It is for the appropriate assessing authorities to determine which land/building falls within which category in accordance

with law and in the light of this judgment and take appropriate further action. In this connection, we may mention that the assessing authorities under the Act have to decide several questions under the Act including the questions whether

any land or building is being used for ""charitable purpose"" or ""public worship"". They also have to decide whether a land is an ""agricultural land"". These are difficult questions as would be evident from a reference to the plethora of

decisions under the Income Tax Act where these expressions occur. For this reason, neither the exemption can be held to be ineffective nor the authorities can be said to have no jurisdiction to decide these questions. Appeals are

provided to civil courts against the orders of the assessing authorities.

In the light of the above position of law, it is for Union of India to consider whether any steps are to be taken to maintain the balance between the Union and the States in the matter of taxation.

PARTY - V

55. The following conclusions flow from the above discussion:

(a) the property taxes levied by and under the Punjab Municipal Act, 1911, the New Delhi Municipal Council Act, 1994 and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 constitute ""Union taxation"" within the meaning of Clause (1) of

Article 289 of the Constitution of India;

(b) the levy of property taxes under the aforesaid enactments on lands and/or buildings belonging to the State governments is invalid and incompetent by virtue of the mandate contained in Clause (1) of Article 289. However, if any land

or building is used or occupied for the purposes of any trade or business-trade or business as explained in the body of this judgment-carried on by or on behalf of the State government, such land or building shall be subject to levy of

property taxes levied by the said enactments. In other words, State property exempted under Clause (1) means such property as is used for the purpose of the government and not the purposes of trade or business;

(c) it is for the authorities under the said enactments to determine with notice to the affected State government, which land or building is used or occupied for the purposes of any trade or business carried on by or on behalf of that State

government.

56. We direct that this judgment shall operate only prospectively. It will govern the Financial Year 1996-97 (commencing on April 1, 1996) and onwards. For this purpose, we invoke our power under Article 142 of the Constitution. The

reasons are the following:

(a) according to the judgment under appeal, the properties of the State were exempt in toto whereas according to this judgment, some of the properties of the State situated within the Union Territory of Delhi may become liable to tax.

The assessees are the State governments and the taxes are being levied under a Parliamentary enactment. This inter-state character of the dispute is a relevant factor;

(b) from the year 1975 upto now, there have been no assessments because of the judgment of the High Court; and

(c) retrospective assessment of properties under the above enactments appears to be a doubtful proposition-at any rate, not an advisable thing to do in all the facts and circumstances of this case.

57. Before parting with this case, it would be appropriate to refer to a submission of Sri B. Sen. He submitted that the exemption provided by Clause (1) of Article 289 does not and cannot apply to compensatory taxes like water tax,

drainage tax and so on. Even where the enactment does not specifically and individually enumerate these components of property taxes, i.e., where the levy is of a composite tax known as ""Property tax"", it must be presumed, says Sri B.

Sen, that part of the property taxes are compensatory in nature. We are, however, not inclined to express any opinion on this aspect in the absence of any material placed in support thereof. We cannot permit this new plea, which does

not appear to be a pure question of law, to be raised for the first time at the time of arguments in these appeals/writ petitions.

58. The appeals and writ petitions are accordingly disposed of in the above terms. The judgment of the High Court shall stand modified to the extent it is contrary to this judgment.

59. There shall be no order as to costs.

A.M. Ahmadi, C.J.

60. These civil appeals and special leave petitions have been filed against the judgment and. order of the Delhi High Court dated March 14, 1975 in Civil Writ Petition No. 342 of 1969 and other orders which follow this judgment. The

appellant in all these matters is the New Delhi Municipal Committee (hereinafter called ""the NDMC""). The respondents are the Union of India and the States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Kerala, Madhya

Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura and West Bengal. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (hereinafter called ""the MCD"") appears as an intervenor.

The Case History.

61. The developments that occasioned the setting up of the Constitution Bench may now be briefly set out. The Punjab Municipal Act, 1911 (hereinafter called ""the Act"") is applicable to the Union Territory of Delhi and under the

provisions of this Act, the NDMC had been levying property tax on the immovable properties of the respondent State situated within Delhi. The respondents challenged the imposition of such a tax on their properties before the Delhi High

Court by contending that it would fall within the exemption provided for in Article 289(1) of the Constitution. In the impugned judgment, the Delhi High Court, while accepting this contention, relied upon the relevant observations of the 9-

Judge Constitution Bench of this Court in In Re The Bill to amend Section 20 of the Sea Customs Act, 1878 and Section 3 of the Central Excises and Salt Act, 1944 280738 (hereinafter called ""The Sea Customs Case""), to quash the

assessment and demands of house-tax in respect of the properties of the States and restrained the NDMC from levying such a tax in future. The NDMC filed an application under Article 133(1)(c) of the Constitution seeking the grant of

a certificate for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court; while granting the Certificate, the High Court observed that the principal question before it had grave constitutional implications which required an authoritative decision by this Court.

62. On January 1, 1976 a Division Bench of this 64. Court directed that the NDMC could continue to make assessments but it was not to issue demand notices or make any attempts towards realisation of the taxes. On October 29,

1987, another Division Bench of this Court directed that the matter be listed before a Constitution Bench. On January 14, 1993, a 5-Judge Constitution Bench of this Court began hearing arguments and after considering the rival

submissions, on October 4, 1994, passed an order referring the matter to a 9-Judge Bench. In the said order, the Bench observed that it had considered the decision in the Sea Customs Case and was of the opinion that the point at issue

in these matters was covered therein. The decision in the Sea Customs case having been reaffirmed by the decision of this Court in Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation v. The Income Tax Officer and Anr. [1969] 7

S.C.R. 17 (hereinafter called ""the APSRTC case""), the Bench considered itself bound by the decision; however it was of the view that the arguments advanced before it, which were not considered by the earlier decisions, were plausible

and required consideration which necessitated the setting up of a 9-Judge Bench to hear the matter.

The Impugned Judgment.

63. An analysis of the impugned judgment may now be resorted to in order to gain an insight into the various Constitutional questions that will require our consideration. Before the High Court, the various States contended the following;

by virtue of Article 289(1) of the Constitution, the property of the States is exempt from Union Taxation; the undefined phrase ""Union Taxation"" in Article 289(1) would mean all taxes which the Union is empowered to impose; under the

Constitutional scheme and, specifically under Part VIII of the Constitution, Union Territories are to be administered by the President of India through the laws of Parliament; Parliament is the law-making body for all Union Territories and

by virtue of Article 246(4), while legislating for Union Territories, the power of Parliament to make laws extends to all the three lists in Schedule VII of the Constitution pertaining to legislative competence; insofar as the Act and its

application to the Union Territory of Delhi is concerned, though it relates to a matter in the State List, it would still amount to ""Union Taxation"" because, by virtue of its application to the Union Territory of Delhi, it would be deemed to

have been incorporated in law made by Parliament and would therefore be a Union Law imposing tax; since the tax imposed by the Act amounts to Union Taxation, the exemption in Article 289(1) of the Constitution which makes the

property of the States immune from Union Taxation would be attracted, and the properties of the States situated in Delhi would be exempt from all taxes on property.

64. For the NDMC, it was contended : the phrase ""Union Taxation"" would not extend to legislations in Union Territories and its interpretation should be restricted to laws made by Parliament in respect of the entries in List I; the Union

had no power to impose taxes on entries relating to property as they fall under List II; the Act being a State Legislation could not be treated as a Central Legislation for the purpose of attracting Article 289(1); the test to determine

whether a tax forms part of ""Union Taxation"" is to check if the proceeds thereof form part of the Consolidated Fund of India; since the proceeds of taxes on property under the Act did not form part of the Consolidated Fund of India but

were retained by the Municipality for its own purposes, such a tax would not form part of ""Union Taxation"" and the States were therefore not entitled to be exempted from paying it under Article 289(1); the scheme of the Constitution

indicates that Part C states, which later came to be called Union Territories, were carved out as separate entities and were not to be regarded as part and parcel of the Union Government; when the Union Government legislates for Union

Territories, it does so in a special and different capacity, and not as the Union Legislature; it would therefore be erroneous to treat such laws made by the Union Government for the Union Territories as part of Union laws that would

account for ""Union Taxation"" under Article 289(1).

65. To reach its conclusion, the High Court conducted an examination of the legislative history of the Act and its extension to the Union Territory of Delhi; studied the scheme of the Constitution with regard to the distribution of legislative

powers between the States and the Union; considered the historical Constitutional position of Union Territories; scrutinised the series of decisions of this Court on the issue whether a Union Territory is to be regarded as a State, and

analysed the decision in the Sea Customs case to appreciate the true import of Article 289(1). In arriving at its conclusion, the High Court rejected the test of the proceeds of taxes being part of the Consolidated Fund of India as being

determinative of the nature of Union Taxation. It accepted the contention that all laws applicable in a Union Territory would be deemed to be laws made by Parliament and would therefore be part of ""Union Taxation"" and relied upon the

following observation in the Sea Customs case (at p. 812) for support:

If a State has any property in any Union Territory that property would be exempt from Union Taxation on property under Article 289(1).

The High Court rejected the contention that the Act was a State enactment and stated that under the scheme of the Constitution, the term ""Union Territory"" was distinct from ""State"" and therefore, the Union Territories could not claim to

be States for the purpose of attracting the exemption in Article 289(1).

66. Faced with such a vast gamut of issues of Constitutional import, we are of the view that before we analyse the submissions put forth before us by the learned Counsel for the various parties, it would be convenient if the historical

background of certain aspects of the matter could be set out so as to provide a setting where the rival contentions can be better understood.

Constitutional history of the areas that are now called ""Union Territories"".

67. In the pre-Constitutional era, these territories were called Chief Commissioner"s Provinces. The Government of India Act 1919 contained specific provisions for the governance of these areas. Under the Scheme of the Government

of India Act, 1935 (hereinafter referred to as ""the 1935 Act""), the Federation of India comprised : (a) the Provinces called Governor"s Provinces; (b) the Indian States which had acceded to or were expected to accede to the

Federation; and (c) the Chief Commissioner"s Provinces. Part IV of the 1935 Act dealt with the Chief Commissioner"s Provinces and Section 94 listed them as : (i) British Baluchistan (ii) Delhi (iii) Ajmer-Marwara (iv) Coorg, (v)

Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and (vi) the area known as Panth Piploda : and provided that these areas were to be administered by the Governor General, acting through a Chief Commissioner.

68. On July 31, 1947, during the incipient stages of the framing of the Constitution, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was established to study and report on the Constitutional changes required in the

administrative structure existing in the Chief Commissioner"s provinces to give to the people of these provinces a due place in the democratic governance of free India. After the recommendations of this Committee were sanctioned by the

Drafting Committee, they were placed before the Constituent Assembly for its consideration.

69. The Constituent Assembly considered all aspects of the issue with a view to providing an appropriate administration for what were called Part C States, which included three former Chief Commissioner"s Provinces-Delhi, Ajmer and

Coorg and some erstwhile Indian States which were retained as centrally administered areas after their merger with India; the latter group consisted of the following areas : Himachal Pradesh, Bhopal, Bilaspur, Cooch-Bihar, Kutch,

Tripura, Manipur and Vindhya Pradesh. It was decided that the decision whether these territories should have legislatures and Councils of Ministers ought to be left to Parliament and, for this purpose, an enabling provision should be

incorporated within the Constitution. It was also provided that these Part C States would be administered by the President, acting to such extent as he thought fit, through a Chief Commissioner or a Lieutenant Governor to be appointed

by him, or through the Governor of a neighbouring State, subject to certain procedural requirements. Accordingly. Article 239 and 240 were inserted in the final draft of the Constitution.

70. Under the Constitution of India, as initially enacted, the States were divided into Part A States, Part B States, Part C States and the territories in Part D. The First Schedule to the Constitution provided details of the States falling

within each of these categories. The Part C States comprised : (i) Ajmer; (ii) Bhopal; (iii) Bilaspur; (iv) Cooch-Bihar; (v) Coorg; (vi) Delhi; (vii) Himachal Pradesh; (viii) Manipur; and (ix) Tripura. The only territory under Part D was

Andaman & Nicobar. Part VIII of the Constitution, comprising Articles 239-242, dealt with Part C States. Article 239 provided that Part C States were to be administered by the President acting through a Chief Commissioner or a

Lieutenant Governor. Article 240 provided that Parliament could, by law, create a local legislature or a Council of Ministers or both for a Part C State and such a law would not be construed as a law amending the Constitution. Article

241 allowed Parliament to constitute High Courts for the States in Part C States. Article 242 was a special provision of Coorg. Article 243, which also constituted Part IX of the Constitution, stated that territories in Part D would be

administered by the President through a Chief Commissioner or other authority to be appointed by him.

71. In exercise of its powers under Article 240 (as it then stood), Parliament enacted the Government of Part C States Act, 1951 whereunder provisions were made in certain Part C States for a Council of Ministers to aid and advise the

Chief Commissioner and also for a legislature comprising elected representatives. Section 22 of this legislation made it clear that the legislative powers of such Part C States would be without prejudice to the plenary powers of Parliament

to legislate upon any subject.

72. The States Reorganisation Commission which was set up in December, 1953, while studying the working of the units of the Union, took up the functioning of the Part C States for examination as an independent topic. In its Report,

submitted in 1955, the Commission expressed the view that Part C States were neither financially viable nor functionally efficient, and recommended that each of them should either be amalgamated with the neighbouring States or made a

centrally administered territory.

73. Substantial changes were made by the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956 (hereinafter called ""the Seventh Amendment Act""), which incorporated the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission and was to

have effect in concert with the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. The four categories of States that existed prior to these Acts were reduced to two categories. The first of these categories comprised one class, called "States," and there

were 14 such "States". The second category comprised the areas which had earlier been included in Part C and Part D States; these areas were called ""Union Territories"" and were six in number. Some additions and deletions were made

to the existing lists. While Ajmer, Bhopal, Coorg, Bilaspur and Cooch-Bihar became parts of other States, the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands became a Union Territory. The six Union Territories, therefore, were; (1) Delhi (2)

Himachal Pradesh (3) Manipur; (4) Tripura; (5) Andaman & Nicobar Islands; (6) The Laccadive, Minicoy & Amindivi Islands.

74. The Seventh Amendment Act also replaced Articles 239 & 240 by new provision; the new Article 240 allowed the President to make regulations for certain Union Territories and this provision continues to this day. It also repealed

Article 242 & 243 of the Constitution.

75. Subsequently, Dadar & Nagar Haveli became a Union Territory by the Constitution (Tenth Amendment) Act 1961; Goa, Daman & Dm and Pondicherry became Union Territories by the Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act,

1962; Chandigarh became a Union Territory by the Punjab (Reorganisation) Act, 1966.

76. The Constitution (Fourteenth Amendment) Act, 1962 replaced the old Article 240 as Article 239-A, enabling Parliament to create a Legislature and/or a Council of Ministers for Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Goa, Daman

and Diu and Pondicherry. Thereafter, by the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, Parliament did create Legislative Assemblies, comprising three nominated persons, for these territories.

77. Himachal Pradesh ceased to be a Union Territory by virtue of the State of Himachal Pradesh Act, 1970. Manipur and Tripura became states by virtue of the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971. Arunachal Pradesh,

Mizoram and Goa, Daman & Diu ceased to be Union Territories by virtue of the State of Arunachal Act 1986, the State of Mizoram Act, 1986 and the Goa, Daman & Diu (Reorganisation) Act, 1987 respectively. The Laccadive,

Minicoy and Amindivi Islands (Alteration of Names) Act, 1973 changed the name of these Islands to "Lakshadweep" but it continued to remain a Union Territory.

79. The present list of Union Territories is as follows : (i) Delhi; (ii) Andaman & Nicobar; (iii) Lakshadweep; (iv) Dadar & Nagar Haveli; (v) Daman and & Diu; (vi) Pondicherry and (vii) Chandigarh. However, it is to be noted that all the

Union Territories do not have the same status, By the Constitution (Sixty-Ninth Amendment) Act, 1991, Article 239-AA and 239AB, which are special provisions in relation to Delhi, were added. They provide that Delhi, which is to be

called the National Capital Territory of Delhi, is to have a Legislative Assembly which will be competent to enact laws for matters falling in Lists II & III barring a few specific entries. As the position stands at the present moment, the

Union Territories can be divided into three categories:

(i) Union Territories without legislatures-comprising Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Chandigarh.

(ii) Union Territories for which legislatures have been established by Acts of parliament under Article 239-A Pondicherry is the sole occupant of this category.

(iii) Union Territories which have legislatures created by the Constitution (Articles 239-AA and 239AB)-The National Capital Territory of Delhi is the sole occupant of this category.

The Constitutional History of the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the application of the Act to it.

80. The area that is now known as the National Capital Territory of Delhi was, until 1911, classified as a District of the State of Punjab. Following the announcement of the decision to transfer the capital of British India from Calcutta to

Delhi. Government Notification No, 911 dated September 17, 1912 was issued authorising the Governor General to take under his authority the territory comprising the Tehsil of Delhi and adjoining areas. The Notification provided for

the administration of these areas as a separate province under the Chief Commissioner. The Delhi Laws Act, 1912 and the Delhi Laws Act, 1915 made provisions for the continuance of laws in force in the territories comprising the Chief

Commissioner"s Province in Delhi and for the extension of other enactments in force in any part of British India to Delhi by the Governor-General-in-Council. Under the Government of India Act, 1919, the Indian Legislature had the

power to enact laws for the province of Delhi. However, legislation for Delhi was made by extension of laws in force in Punjab and other States by Notifications issued under the Delhi Laws Act, 1912 and 1915. This enabled the

Governor-General-in-Council to ensure, as for as possible, uniformity of laws with punjab, since a substantial part of Delhi had originally formed an administrative district of that province. After Independence, Delhi continued to be

administered directly by the Government of India and the different Departments of that Government began to deal directly with corresponding Departments in the Chief Commissioner"s Office. This arrangement continued till shortly after

the commencement of the Constitution.

81. In the period immediately after the commencement of the Constitution, the part C States Act, 1951 contained a specific provision, Section 21, in respect of Delhi which enabled it to have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of

Ministers with restrictive powers to make laws. As a result of this provision, Delhi continued to have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers till 1956.

82. The States Reorganisation Commission devoted special attention to the needs of the National Capital. It noted that the dual control arising from the division of responsibility between the Union Government and the State Government

of Delhi had not only hampered the development of the capital, but had also resulted in a ""marked deterioration of administrative standards in Delhi"". The Commission came to the conclusion that the National Capital must remain under

the effective control of Union Government. With reference to the plea for a popular Government, it observed : ""we are definitely of the view that municipal autonomy in the form of the Corporation which will provide grater local autonomy

than is the case in some of the important federal capitals, is the right, in fact, the only solution of the problem of Delhi State.

83. After the Seventh Amendment Act came into force, following the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission, the Legislative Assembly and the Council of Ministers for Delhi ceased to exist with effect from November

1, 1956. Furthermore, the Delhi Municipal Act, 1957 was enacted constituting a Municipal Corporation for the whole of Delhi with members elected on the basis of adult franchise. The jurisdiction of the MCD covered almost the entire

Union Territory of Delhi, including both urban and rural areas. The areas within the limits of NDMC and Delhi Cantonment Board were kept outside due jurisdiction of the MCD, but the territorial jurisdiction of the NDMC was reduced.

As already mentioned, the Constitution (Sixty-Ninth Amendment) Act, 1991 introduced Articles 239-AA and 239AB into the Constitution which provided for a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers for Delhi. Subsequently,

the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991 was enacted to supplement these constitutional provisions.

84. The Act, which was enacted in 1911, was directly applicable to Delhi since at that point of time, it was a district of the State of Punjab. In 1912, when Delhi became a Chief Commissioner''s Province, the provisions of the Act and

various other Punjab enactments were made to continue in force in the territory of Delhi by virtue of the Delhi Laws Act of 1912 and the Delhi Laws Act of 1915. After the Constitution came into being, the Act was made to continue by

virtue of the provisions of the Part C States Laws Act of 1950 and the Union Territories Laws Act of 1950.

85. Therefore, at the time when the present dispute arose, the Act was still in force. However, in 1994, the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi enacted the New Delhi Municipal Committee Act, 1994 which is

the law in force today. The MCD levied property tax on properties situated within the local limits of its jurisdiction by virtue of the provisions of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957. However, for the purposes of deciding the case,

we are concerned only with the provisions of the Act.

86. Before this Court, a number of parties have advanced arguments on the various issues involved in the case. Mr. B. Sen, counsel for the appellants, NDMC, as also the intervenor, MCD, began by challenging the essential premises of

the impugned judgment and advanced elaborate arguments on the manner in which the various Constitutional provisions that are germane to the case, ought to be interpreted. The learned Attorney General for India, appearing for the

Union of India, supported the stance adopted by the NDMC. These submissions were strenuously opposed by Mr. P.P. Rao, learned Counsel for the State of Punjab and in this endeavour, he was assisted by Mr. A.K. Ganguli, learned

Counsel for the State of Tripura who buttressed the position of the States with his own submissions. The learned Counsel appearing for the State of Rajasthan lent support to the same.

The Central Issues

87. As before the High Court, so before us, the controversy between the parties has, in the main, centerd around the question whether the properties owned and occupied by the various States within the National Capital Territory of

Delhi are entitled to be exempted from the levy of taxes under the Act by virtue of the provisions of Article 289(1). The larger question involved, which will consequently require our consideration, is whether by virtue of Article 289(1),

the States are entitled to exemption from the levy of taxes imposed by laws made by Parliament under Article 246(4) upon their properties situated within Union Territories.

88. At this stage, we may set out the provisions that are central to the adjudication of the present matter. In the following table, for the purposes of clarity and convenience, Articles 285 and 289 of the present Constitution have been

contrasted against their immediate predecessors, viz., Sections 154 & 155 of the 1935 Act.

---------- GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, Constitution OF 1935 INDIA ---------- 4 Section 154 ---------- Exemption of certain public Article Exemption of property of the property from taxation- 285 Union from State taxation- Property vested in His Majesty (1) The property of the for purposes of the government Union shall, save in so far as of the Federation shall, save in Parliament may by law so far as any Federal law may otherwise provide, be otherwise provide, be exempt exempted from all taxes from all taxes imposed by,or imposed by a State or by any by any authority within a authority within, a State. Province of Federated State. Provided until any Federal law (2) Nothing in Clause (1) otherwise provides, any shall, until Parliament by law property so vested which was otherwise provides, prevent immediately before the any authority within a State commencement of Part III of from levying any tax on any this Act liable, or treated as property of the Union to liable, to any such tax, shall, so which such property was long as that tax continues, immediately before the continue to be liable, or to be commencement of this treated as liable, thereto. Constitution liable or treated as liable, so long as that tax continues to be levied in that State. ---------- Section 155 ---------- 5 Exemption of Provincial Article Exemption of property and Governments and Rulers of 289 income of a State from Union Federated States in respect of taxation - (1) The property Federal taxation-(1) Subject as and income of a State shall hereinafter provided, the be exempt from Union Government of a Province and taxation. the Ruler of a Federated State shall not be liable to Federal (2) Nothing in Clause (1) taxation in respect of lands or shall prevent the Union buildings situate in British India from imposing, or or income accruing, arising or authorising the imposition received in British India; of, any tax to such extent, if any, as Parliament may by Provided that- law provide in respect of a (a) where a trade or business of trade or business of any any kind is carried on by or on kind carried on by, or on behalf of the Government of a behalf of, the Government Province in any part of British of a State, or any operations India outside that Province or connected therewith, or any by a Ruler in any part of British property used or occupied India, nothing in this sub- for the purposes of such section shall exempt that trade or business, or any Government or Ruler from any income accruing or arising Federal taxation in respect of in connection therewith. that trade or business, or any (3) Nothing in Clause (2) operations connected shall apply to any trade or therewith, or any income business, or to any class of arising in connection therewith, trade or business, which or any property occupied for Parliament may be law the purposes thereof; declare to be incidental to be ordinary functions of government. (b) nothing in this Sub-section shall exempt a Ruler from any Federal taxation in respect of any lands buildings or income being his personal property or personal income. (2) Nothing in this Act affects any exemption from taxation enjoyed as of right at the passing of this Act by the Ruler of an Indian State in respect of any Indian Government securities issued before that date.

Submissions of Counsel

89. Mr. Sen prefaced his submissions for the NDMC and the MCD by pointing out that the phrase ""Union Taxation"" used in Article 289(1) of the Constitution has not been defined either in the text of the Constitution or in any of the

decisions rendered by this Court. Pointing out the difference between Articles 285 & 289, Mr. Sen stated that (i) the former exempts ""all taxes"" whereas the latter limits its exemption to taxes relating to ""property and income""; and (ii) the

former uses the words ""imposed by a State or by any authority within a State"" whereas the latter uses the phrase ""Union Taxation"". Thereafter, Mr. Sen contrasted Article 289(1) and Section 155 of the 1935 Act by pointing out that

while Section 155(1) uses the words ""lands & buildings"", Article 289(1) uses the word ""property"". This, he explained, was on account of the strong position adopted by representatives of the States in the Constituent Assembly who had

insisted that the ambit of the exemptions be cast wider.

90. At this juncture, we may refer to Article 246 which reads as follows:

246. Subject-matter of laws made by Parliament and by the Legislatures of States-(1) Notwithstanding anything in Clauses (2) and (3), Parliament has exclusive power to make law with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List I

in the Seventh Schedule (in this Constitution referred to as the ""Union List"").

(2) Notwithstanding anything in Clause (3), Parliament, and, subject to Clause (1) the legislature of any State also, have power to make laws with respect to any of the matters enumerated in list HI in the Seventh Schedule (in this

Constitution referred to as the "Concurrent List").

(3) Subject to Clauses (1) and (2), the Legislature of any State has exclusive power to make laws for such State or any part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List II in the Seventh Schedule (in this Constitution

referred to as the "State List").

(4) Parliament has power to make laws with respect to any matter for any part of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List.

Mr. Sen then submitted that two possible meanings could be ascribed to the phrase ""Union Taxation"" : (i) Taxes that are levied by Parliament in exercise of its powers under Article 246(1) and pertain only to entries in List I of the Seventh

Schedule; (ii) Any tax that is levied as a result of a law passed by Parliament including those that are relatable to entries in List II and List III of the Seventh Schedule. Mr. Sen vehemently urged that the former interpretation be adopted

by this Court. According to him, acceptance of the latter would lead to anomalous results. He submitted that when Parliament makes laws in exercise of its powers under Article 246(4) and in doing so, legislates on entries in List-II, it is

doing so in a different capacity and the character of these laws is different from ordinary Union legislations. To drive home the argument, Mr. Sen led us through certain other provisions of the Constitution, such as, Articles 249, 250, 252

and the Emergency Provisions in Part XVIII of the Constitution which empower Parliament to make laws on entries in List II, but the nature and effect of these legislations requires that they be not treated as ordinary Union legislations.

91. Thereafter, he took us through various provisions in Part XII of the Constitution with a view to analysing the distribution of revenues between the Union and the States. Having done so, he invited our attention to the provisions of Part

VIII of the Constitution to support his stand that a Union Territory is an independent Constitutional entity akin to a State and that it has an identity separate from that of the Union Government. To this end, he drew our attention towards

several decisions of this Court on the question whether a Union Territory is a State and sought to convince us that, in the present context, the answer to this query must be in the affirmative.

92. Referring to the two decisions of this Court on the interpretation of Article 289(1) rendered in the Sea Customs case and the APSRTC case, Mr. Sen contended that the issue arising before this Court in the present matter had not

arisen for adjudication in either of these two cases. He submitted that the observation made by Sinha, CJ. in the former case would, therefore, have to be regard as obiter dicta since the issue of laws relating to Union Territories was not

before the Court. He explained that such an observation was made in the context situations where Parliament can directly impose a tax on property to counter the argument that only States could levy taxes directly on property under the

Constitution. Mr. Sen stated that the observation was founded on misconceived premises and that there were other, more appropriate situations where Parliament could impose taxes directly on Property, such as, in the case of Entry 3,

List I which deals with Cantonments and the Cantonments Act, 1924 which allows Parliament to levy taxes for Contonments. Mr. Sen then contended that such a power would be available to Parliament even when it enacts a legislation

by using Entry 49, List I which relates to patents, inventions and designs, and also in the case of a few other entries in List I.

93. Thereafter, Mr. Sen contended that, in any event, the taxes levied by NDMC would not amount to Union Taxation because they are in the nature of a Municipal Tax. Our attention was drawn towards the Constitution (Seventy-

Fourth) Amendment Act, 1992 which incorporated Part IXA, dealing with Municipalities in our Constitution. He argued that Municipalities now have an elevated Constitutional status and that since they have their own machinery for

collecting taxes besides having control over the fixing and charging of the taxes, these taxes cannot be regarded as part of ""Union Taxation"". He then took us through the relevant provisions of the Act, the New Delhi Municipal

Corporation Act, 1994 and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957 to indicate that each of these bodies has been vested with wide powers of fixing the rates of taxes, collecting them and then using the proceeds, which go to specially

created Municipal funds, towards securing their objectives. Drawing sustenance from the language of Article 285, which specifically exempts taxes imposed by local authorities, Mr. Sen submitted that since an express exemption is not

referred to in Article 289(1), municipal taxes were not meant to be covered within it"s exemption and, therefore, the States are bound to pay these taxes to the NDMC and the MCD.

94. The learned Attorney General for India began by stating that it is not the identification of the legislature that imposes the law which is determinative of the issue of ""Union Taxation"". According to him, to determine the true character of

Union Taxation, the subject of the levy must be analysed. He submitted that when Parliament makes use of its power under Article 246(4), it does so in an unusual circumstance where the ''theme'' of the legislation undergoes a change.

He, therefore, stressed that in determining the scope of ""Union Taxation"" attention must be paid to the ''theme'', (i.e., the context and the specific circumstances in which the tax is levied) rather than to the ''author'' (i.e. the body which is

levying the tax). He, therefore, submitted that the interpretation of ""Union Taxation"" should be restricted to situations where Parliament makes laws imposing taxes under Article 246(1).

95. His next submission was that Articles 285 and 289 do not exhaust the entire area of taxation under the Constitution. Referring to certain other provisions where Parliament is required to make laws for subjects in List II, the learned

Attorney General drew our attention towards Articles 249, 250, 252, 253 and 357. He then submitted that these provisions envisage unusual situations where, although Parliament is the law making body, the resulting laws are not Union

laws in the ordinary sense and the taxes imposed by these laws cannot be said to form part of ""Union Taxation"". He then contended that similarly, laws made by Parliament under Article 246(4) are not the norm and cannot be said to

form part of ""Union Taxation"". Thereafter, the learned Attorney General took us through the constitutional history of Union Territories and more specifically, that of the National Capital Territory of Delhi. Having done so, he stated that

such an analysis would reveal that though Union ''Territories are not States, they are akin to States, being nascent States. He explained that the practice in this regard shows that, in most cases, when a territory is acquired by the Union

and before it is admitted to the Indian Union as a full-fledged State, it is groomed for Statehood by being nurtured as a Union Territory. He then referred us to the decision of this Court in 292240 , to buttress his stance that Parliament

cannot be expected to draft legislations for Union Territories on a regular basis and to explain how it meets with its obligations in this regard.

96. Mr. P.P. Rao, learned Counsel for the States of Punjab & Haryana, began his submissions by explaining the doctrine of immunity of instrumentalities, which is said to be the legal basis for the incorporation of Articles 285 and 289 into

our Constitution, and also mentioned the comparative positions in the American, Canadian and Australian jurisdictions. He submitted that the doctrine postulates that in a federal set up, there should be inter-governmental tax immunities

between the federal and State wings. Such an immunity is a Constitutional limitation on the law-making power of the respective legislatures in the field of taxation as a whole. After its genesis in the U.S., the doctrine has come to be

accepted in Canada and Australia. Mr. Rao conceded that though both the 1935 Act as well as the Constitution had incorporated such reciprocal tax immunities, they were not adopted to the same extent as in Canada and Australia.

However unlike in these countries, the Union of India has sizeable territory of its own comprising all the Union territories specified in the First Schedule. The power to make laws including authorising levy or collection of taxes of all kinds

is conferred exclusively on the Union Parliament and these territories would form an important part of the reciprocal tax immunities.

97. He then drew our attention to Article 265 which incorporates an important constitutional limitation on the power of taxation when it states that ""no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law"". In India, there are only two

legislatures that are competent to tax : ''Parliament for the Union'' and the ''legislature of a State''. Therefore, all taxation must fall within either of the categories-Union Taxation or State Taxation. Municipalities and other local authorities

cannot have an independent power to tax and that is why there can be no exemption for Municipal taxes independent of the exemption for State of Union Taxation. To that extent, he submits, the contention of Mr. Sen, that Article 289

exempts only Union Taxation without mentioning municipal taxes which would imply that the States would not be exempt from paying the latter, cannot be accepted.

98. Moving on to the definition of the term ""Union Taxation"", Mr. Rao pointed out that in Article 285 the term ""State Taxation"" has been defined as ""all taxes imposed by a State or by any authority within a State''. He urged us to adopt a

similar interpretation for ""Union Taxation"" even though Article 289 does not contain any such definition by pointing out that being corollaries of each other, these terms would have been used to convey a similar meaning. If this definition

were to be accepted, ""Union Taxation"" would mean ""all taxes imposed by the Union"" and, therefore, the State would be entitled for exemption from the taxes imposed by NDMC. To explain the language and ambit of Articles 285 and

289, Mr. Rao took us through a detailed examination of the provisions of the 1935 Act with a view to appreciating the true import of the predecessors of these two provisions, namely, Sections 154 and 155 of the said Act. To this end,

we were taken through Sections 5, 6, 94, 99, 100, 104, 154 and 155 and Lists I & II of the Seventh Schedule to the 1935 Act. Mr. Rao, thereafter, contended that under the scheme of the 1935 Act, it was quite clear that by virtue of

Section 155, the Provinces (predecessors of ""States"") were entitled to exemption from taxes on ''lands and buildings'' in the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces (predecessors of ""Union Territories""). He contends that the position continues

in the present Article 289 and, in fact, the immunity is much wide in scope since ''property'' is wider than ''lands and buildings''. Mr. Rao also led us through the relevant passages of the Sea Customs case and stressed that both the

minority and the majority opinions in that case had taken the view that the properties of States situated in Union Territories were exempt from taxation. To sum up, Mr. Rao put forth his submissions to counter those put forth by Mr. Sen

and the learned Attorney General towards establishing that, even while exercising its powers under Article 246(1), Parliament can levy taxes directly on property.

99. Mr. A.K. Ganguli, learned Counsel for the State of Tripura, lent support to the submissions of Mr. Rao on the issue of Parliamentary laws being applicable to Union Territories; he emphasised that even after the introduction of

Articles 239-AA and 239AB in the Constitution, the Delhi Legislature could not be said to be a legislative body with plenary powers. The legislative powers conferred on such a body are restricted and limited to certain spheres and are

subject to the powers of the Parliament to make laws with respect to any matter for the Union Territories, which obviously refers to Article 246(4) of the Constitution. By way of an analogy, he referred us to Article 244 and the Sixth

Schedule to the Constitution which contain provisions for the administration of Tribal areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram and provide for bodies with legislative powers. He led us through decisions of this

Court on the point that the law making powers of these bodies, though conferred by the Constitution itself, are not plenary powers as those of Parliament or of the State legislatures.

100. Counsel submitted that the provisions contained in Part XII of the Constitution relating to distribution of revenue between the Union and the States are not determinative of the scope of the expression ""Union Taxation"" in Article

289(1) as they only indicate that though a large number of taxes are levied by the Parliament and collected by the Union Government, eventually, a substantial portion thereof is distributed amongst the States.

101. After submitting that the main controversy in this case is squarely covered by the decision in the Sea Customs case, Mr. Ganguli pointed out that the Government of India, while preparing its Receipt Budget, has always treated taxes

imposed by Parliament and collected from the Union Territories as part of the total tax revenue of the Union Government in which other taxes such as corporation tax, taxes on income, customs duties and union excise duties are also

included. He submitted that even in respect of non-tax revenue, the receipts from the Union Territories are treated as receipts of the Union Government. He, therefore, contended that even the Union Government was of the view that

Union Taxation"" included taxes levied by Parliament in Union Territories.

102. Learned Counsel for the State of Rajasthan, Mr. Gupta, sought to bring to our notice a wider comparative position of the manner in which countries around the world have adopted the American doctrine of reciprocal immunity.

103. Having noticed the submissions of the counsel for the various parties before us, we may now proceed to express our opinion on the diverse points raised in the present case.

Analysis of the decisions rendered in the Sea Customs case and the APSRTC case.

104. The decision in the Sea Customs''s case was occasioned by the emanation of a proposal to introduce in Parliament a Bill to amend Section 20 of the Sea Customs Act, 1878, and Section 3 of the Central Excise and Salt Act, 1944.

These amendments would have led to the imposition of indirect taxes, namely excise and customs duties upon the properties of various States which were being used for purposes other than those specified in Article 289(2), i.e., for

purposes not relating to trade or business. A number of State Governments objected that such a law would fall foul of the interdiction in Article 289(1) and, in view of the resulting controversy, the President referred, under Article 143,

the issue of the constitutionality of the proposed amendments to this Court. The issue was decided by a majority of 5 : 4. It was held that the immunity granted to States in respect of Union Taxation under Article 289 extends only to those

taxes that are directly leviable upon the property and income of the States; since excise and customs duties are indirect taxes, they would not fall within the ambit of the exemption in Article 289 and Parliament could impose such duties

upon the property and income of the States. There were two opinions outlining the majority view and an equal number for the minority. Sinha, CJ. delivered the first of the majority judgments on behalf of himself, Gajendragadkar,

Wanchoo and Shah, JJ. while Rajagopala Ayyangar, J. delivered a separate, concurring opinion. S.K. Das, J. delivered the first of the minority opinions on behalf of himself, Sarkar and Das Gupta, JJ. while Hidayatullah, J. rendered a

separate minority opinion.

105. A number of submissions were advanced before the Court with a view to facilitating a true construction of Article 289(1). In this regard, comparisons were drawn with its corollary, Article 285 and with the provisions which inspired

the adoption of these two provisions, namely, Sections 154 and 155 of the 1935 Act. The Court was also required to analyse the scheme of the Constitution relevant to the issue. For the moment, it is not necessary for us to analyse those

aspects of the decision since, in any event, we will be required to give our independent consideration to these matters. We can, therefore, confine ourselves to those observations that have a direct bearing upon the point at issue with

which we are presently concerned; this aspect was, however, not specifically adverted to in all the four opinions.

106. In his opinion for the majority, Sinha, C.J. has referred to the essential contentions urged before the Court. The Union urged that the exemption in Clause (1) of Article 289 be interpreted restrictively, limiting its applicability to direct

taxes on the property and the income of States; the States, on the other hand, canvassed for an expansive interpretation which would exempt them from taxes having any relation whatsoever to their property and income. The learned

Chief Justice noted that it was not disputed that the exemption in Article 289(1) was, as far as taxes on income are concerned, restricted to ""Taxes other than on agricultural income"", which is the only entry (Entry 82) in List I of the

Seventh Schedule which enables Parliament to legislate on taxes relating to income. The learned Chief Justice considered this to be a significant fact as it meant that if the income of State was exempt only from taxes on income, the

juxtaposition of the words ""property and income"" in Article 289(1) would lead to the inference that property is also exempt only from direct taxes on property. However, it was pointed out by the States that List I does not contain any

specific tax on property which would enable Parliament to pass a law relating to taxes on property and, that being so, that intention of the framers of the Constitution must have been to exempt the property of States from all taxes, be they

direct or indirect. To meet this argument, the learned Solicitor General, appearing for the Union, put forth several arguments, one of which came to be accepted by the learned Chief Justice as the main plank upon which he based his

rejection of the contention of the States. Since these observations are directly relevant to the present case, they may be extracted here (at p. 812):

It is true that List-I contains no tax directly on property like List-II, but it does not follow from that the Union has no power to impose a tax directly on property under any circumstances. Article 246(4) gives power to Parliament to make

laws with respect to any matter for any part of the territory of India not included in a State notwithstanding that such matter is a matter enumerated in the State List. This means that so far as Union territories are concerned Parliament has

power to legislate not only with respect to items in List I but also with respect to item in List II. Therefore, so far as Union territories are concerned, Parliament has power to impose a tax directly on property as such. It cannot therefore

be said that the exemption of State''s property under Article 289(1) would be meaningless as Parliament has no power to impose any tax directly on property. If a State has any property in any Union territory that property would be

exempt from Union taxation on property under Article 289(1). The argument therefore that Article 289(1) cannot be confined to tax directly on property because there is no such tax provided in List I cannot be accepted.

(emphasis added)

Thereafter, having referred to the language of Article 285 and the intention of the framers as perceived by him, the learned Chief Justice came to the conclusion that the immunity granted by Articles 285 and 289 was of similar ambit and

extended only to direct taxes without exempting indirect taxes such as excise and customs duties.

107. Das, J., in his dissenting opinion, noted the objection of the States that List I had no entry which would enable Parliament to levy a tax directly on property. He took note of the counterarguments advanced by the learned Solicitor

General in relation to this aspect but could not bring himself to agree with the correctness of those propositions. While referring to the argument on Article 246(4), he noted (at p. 843):

...It would be a case of much ado about nothing if the Constitution solemnly provided for an exemption against ''property tax'''' on State property only for such rare cases as are contemplated in Article 246(4), the situation of State

property in territory not included in a State. Such situation would be very rare, and could have hardly necessitated a solemn safeguard at the inception of the Constitution when the States were classed under Part A or Part B of the First

Schedule. If the wider interpretation of Clause (1) of Article 289 is accepted, such property would also be exempted from Union taxation except in cases covered by Clause (2) of the article. We find it difficult to accept the contention

that Clause (1) of Article 289 was meant only for cases covered by Article 246(4)...

(emphasis added)

At this juncture, we may note that both Mr. Rao and Mr. Ganguli were at pains to point out that though Das, J. rejected the overall contention of the learned Solicitor General, he had, by stating that the exemption could not have been

provided ''''only for such rare cases as are contemplated in Article 246(4)'''', implicitly accepted that these cases would fall within the exemption in Article 289(1).

108. Rajagopala Ayyangar, J., in his separate majority judgment, makes a specific reference to this contention of the learned Solicitor General (at pp. 918-19) but, aside from stating that ''''the submission of the learned Solicitor General

are not without force'''' (at p. 919), he did not make any further reference to the matter. Hidayatullah, J., in his separate minority opinion, did not advert to this issue.

109. The preceding analysis reveals that the issue at hand was specifically answered by this Court in the Sea Customs''s case. We find it difficult to accept Mr. Sen''s contention that the observations of Sinha, C.J. were made by way of

obiter dicta. Though the issue of legislations applicable in Union Territories was not specifically before the Court, it did arise for consideration during its analysis of the power of Parliament to levy taxes directly upon property. The latter

question was squarely before the Court and the issue relating to Union Territories, though incidental to the main question, necessarily required consideration. The observations of Sinha, C.J. arc unequivocally in favour of the position

adopted by the States before us, who find themselves in the enviably advantageous position of being able to draw sustenance form even the observations in the dissenting judgment of Das. J.

109. The decision in the Sea Customs''s case was reaffirmed by a Constitution Bench of this Court in the APSRTC case which was a matter relating to assessment of income tax. The facts of that case are not directly relevant for our

purpose but, what is of considerable interest to us is the manner in which the scheme of Article 289 and its three clauses were construed. Speaking for the Court, Gajendragadkar, C.J. outlined the scheme of Article 289 (at p. 25) which

can be stated as follows : The general proposition that flows from Clause (1) is that ordinarily, the income derived by a State both from governmental and nongovernmental or commercial activities shall be immune from income tax levied

by the Union. Clause (2) then provides an exception and empowers Parliament to make a law imposing a tax on the income derived by the Government of a State from trade or business carried on by it, or on its behalf. If Clause (1) had

stood by itself, it would not been possible to include within its purview income derived by a State from commercial activities but since Clause (2) empowers Parliament to enact a law levying taxes on such activities of a State, the

inescapable conclusion is that activities must be deemed to have been included in Clause (1) and that alone can be the justification for the words in which Clause (2) has been couched in the Constitution. Thereafter, Clause (3) empowers

Parliament to declare by law that any trade or business would be taken out of the purview of Clause (2) and restore it to the area covered by Clause (1) by declaring that the said trade or business is incidental to the ordinary functions of

Government. In other words, Clause (3) is an exception to the exception prescribed by Clause (2). Whatever trade or business is declared to be incidental to the ordinary functions of Government, would cease to be governed by Clause

(2) and would then be exempt from Union taxation.

110. These observations of Gajendragadkar, C.J. having been made in the context of income tax levied in the facts of that case, mention only taxes relating to income. They are equally applicable to the taxes relating to property referred

to in Article 289. The essence of this analysis is that Clause (3) of Article 289 is an exception to Clause (2), which in turn is an exception to the first clause of the Article.

Analysis of this Court''s previous rulings on the Constitutional status of Union Territories.

111. We may now refer to a catena of decisions of this Court on the seemingly innocuous issue whether or not a Union territory has, under the scheme of our Constitution, a status distinct from that of the Union and the States. The fact

that so many decisions of this Court exist on the issue would indicate that the matter is not one that can be disposed of by simply pointing to the separate parts of the Constitution which deal with Union Territories as distinct units.

112. Before dealing with the specific circumstances of, and the decision in, each of these cases, it is necessary that a few provisions which figure prominently be dealt with. Article 246(4) of the Constitution, as it stood on January 26,

1950, allowed Parliament to ""make laws with respect to any matter for any part of the territory of India not included in Part A or Part B of the First Schedule"". The Seventh Amendment Act brought about a number of changes affecting

Union Territories, some of which have already been noticed by us. The other changes brought about by it are also relevant; it caused Article 246 to be changed to its present form where Parliament is empowered to make laws with

respect to ""any part of the territory of India not included in a State"". The word ""State"" has not been defined in the Constitution. Article 1(3) defines the territory of India as comprising : (a) the territories of the States; (b) the Union

Territories specified in the First Schedule; and (c) such other territories as may be acquired. The word ''Union Territory'' has been defined in Article 366(30) to mean ""any Union Territory specified in the First Schedule and includes any

other territory comprised within the territory of India but not specified in that Schedule"".

113. Though not defined in the Constitution, the word ""State"" has been defined in the General Clauses Act, 1897 (hereinafter called ""the General Clauses Act""). Article 367 of the Constitution states that the General Clauses Act, 1897

shall, unless the context otherwise requires and subject to any adaptations and modifications made under Article 372, apply for the interpretation of the Constitution. Therefore, on a plain reading of the provisions involved, it would appear

that the definition of ""State"" in the General Clauses Act would be applicable for the purposes of interpreting the Constitution. Article 372 is the saving clause of the Constitution which enables all laws in force before the commencement of

the Constitution to continue in the territory of India. Article 372A, which, once again, owes its origin to the Seventh Amendment Act, empowers the President to make further adaptations in particular situations.

114. Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act, having been amended by the Seventh Amendment Act, reads as follow:

3. Definitions.-In this Act, and in all General Acts and Regulations made after the commencement of this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,-

(58) ""State"",-

(a) as respects any period before the commencement of the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, shall mean a Part A State, a Part B State or a Part C State; and

(b) as respects any period after such commencement, shall mean a State specified in the First Schedule to the Constitution and shall include a Union territory;

(emphasis added)

The latter part of the definition, which states that a Union Territory is included within the definition of a State, has introduced an element of controversy in the interpretation of the Constitution.

115. While appreciating the reasoning of this Court in dealing with cases where it had to confront the issue of the status of Union Territories, the time-frame and the history of the Union Territories which we have adverted to in the earlier

part of this judgment, must be borne in mind. The first of these cases was that of 284484 . This was a case relating to election law and one of the contentions of the appellant, who was seeking to disqualify the respondents under the

provisions of the Representation of Peoples" Act, 1951, was that contracts entered into by the respondents with the Part C States were, in effect, contracts entered into with the Central Government. This contention was based on the

reasoning that the executive action of the Central Government is vested in the President; the President is also the Executive Head of the Part C States; therefore, contracts with the Part C States are contracts with the Central Government.

The Court, speaking through Venkatarama Ayyar, J., rejected this contention and stated that when the President exercised functions as the Head of the Part C States, he occupied a position analogous to the Governor in Part A States.

Furthermore, Section 38(22) of the Government of Part C States Act, 1951 clearly provided that all executive action of the State would be taken in the name of the Chief Commissioner. It was, therefore, held that contracts with the Part

C States could not be said to be contracts with the Central Government. Analysing Articles 239, 240 and 241 of the Constitution, the Court held that it could not be said that these had the effect of converting Part C States into the

Central Government and that they have a distinct status. However when the case came up for review in 278493 , the Court, after having been directed towards, and having taken note of the provisions of, Section 3(8) and Section 3(60)

of the General Clauses Act Which define ""Central Government"" and ""State Government"" respectively, and stipulate that for Part C States, references to ""State Government"" would mean the ""Central Government"", held that a contract with

the Chief Commissioner in a Part C State is a contract with the Central Government. It, however, added that this would not affect the status of Part C States as independent units, distinct from the Union Government under the

Constitution.

116. 282745 , a decision rendered by a Constitution Bench, concerned the State of Vindhya Pradesh which, at the relevant time, was a Part C State and raised the issue whether, in a civil suit, the State of Vindhya Pradesh was the

proper party to be sued u/s 79(a) of the Code of Civil procedure, 1908. The argument of the respondents, based on Sections 3(8) and 3(60) of the General Clauses Act, was that if, in case of the Part C States, ""State Government

means the ""Central Government"", the proper party to be sued would be the Union of India instead of the State of Vindhya Pradesh. Hidayatullah, J., speaking for the Constitution Bench, at pp. 798-802, relied on the observations in the

first of the Satya Dev cases to the effect that Part C States had a separate existence and were not merged with the Central Government and went on to hold that the State of Vindhya Pradesh, having a distinct identity, was the proper

party to be sued. Although the reviewed decision in Satya Dev"s case was not referred to, since the proposition relied upon by Hidayatullah, J. was in fact reaffirmed in the review, the relevant proposition of law laid down in the case

does not suffer from any infirmity.

117. These cases are useful for our purpose to the limited extent that they declare that Union Territories are not part of the Central Government and are, to that extent, distinct Constitutional entities. However, the issue whether Union

Territories are distinct from States was not considered in these cases; it did however arise for consideration in the following cases.

118. In 282963 , the Court had to consider whether the word ""State used in Article 3(c) of the Constitution would include Union Territories; the Constitution Bench followed the stipulation in Articles 367 and 372 to notice the definition

of ""State"" in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act and the context of Article 3 to hold that the word "State" in Article 3(c) would have to be interpreted in the light of Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act and would include

Union Territories. The correctness of this proposition was doubted by Hidayatullah, J in a subsequent case which we will refer to in due course. The fact however remains that and definition in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act

has been utilised for interpreting a Constitutional provision. The question that therefore arises is whether this will affect the status of Union Territories in matters relating to Article 246, to which an answer was provided in a subsequent

case to which we shall immediately advert.

119. 280547 , was a case in which the petitioners had challenged the vires of a regulation by which the President had, in exercise of powers under Article 240, repealed the laws in force in relation to income tax within the Union Territory

of Pondicherry and had made the income tax Act, 1961 applicable to it. Explaining that Parliament, and through it the President, had plenary powers to make laws for Union Territories on all matters, Bachawat, J., speaking for the

Constitution Bench, stated as follows (at pp. 108-109):

Parliament has plenary powers to legislate for the Union Territories with regard to any subject. With regard to Union Territories there is no distribution of legislative powers...(The inclusive definition (in Section 3(58) of the General

Clauses Act) is repugnant to the subject and context of Article 246. There, the expression ""State"" means the States specified in the first Schedule. There is a distribution of legislative power between Parliament and the legislatures of the

States. Exclusive power to legislate with respect to the matters enumerated in the State List is assigned to the legislatures of the States established by Part VI. There is no distribution of legislative power with respect to Union Territories.

That is why Parliament is given power by Article 246(4) to legislate even with respect to matters enumerated in the State List. If the inclusive definition of ""State"" in Section 3(58) of the General Clause Act were to apply to Article 246(4),

Parliament would have no power to legislate for the Union Territories with respect to matters enumerated in the State List and until a legislature empowered to legislate on those matters is created under Article 239-A for the Union

Territories, there would be no legislature competent to legislate on those matters; moreover, for certain territories such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, no legislature can be created under Article 239-A, and for such territories there

can be no authority competent to legislate with respect to matters enumerated in the State List. Such a construction is repugnant to the subject and context of Article 246(4), Parliament has plenary powers to make laws for union

Territories on all matters.

The Court, therefore, held that Parliament was empowered to make laws for Union Territories on all matters and the regulation made by the President in exercise of his power under Article 240 was valid. The ratio of this decision,

therefore, is that the definition of ""State"" provided by Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act would not apply for the purposes of Article 246. This ratio is equally applicable at the present moment for, despite several changes having

been made in respect of Union Territories since the decision in Kanniyan''s case, of the seven existing Union Territories, as many as five do not have Legislatures of their own. The controversy was not, however, put to rest by the decision

in Kanniyan''s case.

In 276407 , the main issue before another Constitution Bench was whether the word ""State"" used in Entry 80 of List I of the Seventh Schedule could be said to exclude the application of the definition in Section 3(58) of the General

Clauses Act. Relying on the decision in Kanniyan''s case, Hidayatullah, J. held that, ordinarily, the definition would apply in the interpretation of the Constitution unless it is repugnant to the subject or context. However, he noted, that after

the Seventh Amendment Act where Union Territories have been mentioned as separate entities, the distinction between ""Union Territories"" and ""States"" cannot be lost sight of. He expressly approved the reasoning of Bachawat, J. in

holding that in the context of Article 246, the definition, provided in Section 3(58) would not apply; however, on the facts and in the circumstances of the case before him, he felt that the subject and context of Entry 80 of the Union List

required the application of the definition given in Section 3(58). While referring to the decision in Ram Kishore''s case, Hidayatullah, J. noted that this decision was per incursion for the reason that it referred to Article 372 whereas the

proper reference ought to have been to Article 372A.

The same issue was thereafter considered by a Constitution Bench in 290531 , wherein Bhargava, J., while delivering an opinion concurring with the majority, reached the conclusion that the definition in Section 3(58) of the General

Clauses Act would not apply to matters involving interpretation of the Constitution. The case, which involved a challenge to the election of Shri V.V. Giri as the President of India, required the Court to consider the issue in the context of

Article 54 which provides that the electoral college for the President consists of the elected members of both Houses of Parliament, and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States. Relying on the definition of ""State

in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act, it was argued that Union Territories are also States and, consequently, the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the Union Territories must also be included in the electoral college;

their omission was said to be a material irregularity which would vitiate the election. Responding to this contention, the learned Judge held as follows

Article 54. no doubt, lays down that all elected members of the legislative assemblies of the States are to be included in the electoral college; but the word "States" used in this Article cannot include Union Territories. It is true that, under

Article 367, the General Clauses Act applies for interpretation of the Constitution as it applies for the interpretation of an Act of the legislature of the Dominion of India; but that Act has been applied as it stood on 26th January, 1950,

when the Constitution came into force, subject only to any adaptations and modifications that may be made therein under Article 372. The General Clauses Act, as it was in 1950 and as adapted or modified under Article 372, did not

define ""State"" so as to include a Union Territory. The Constitution was amended by the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, which introduced Article 372A in the Constitution permitting adaptations and modifications of all laws

which may be necessary or expedient for the purpose of bringing the provisions of the law into accord with the Constitution as amended by the Seventh Amendment Act, 1956. It was in exercise of this power under Article 372A that

Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act was amended, so that, thereafter, ""State"" as defined included Union Territories also. The new definition of ""State"" in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act as a result of modifications and

adaptations under Article 372A would, no doubt, apply to the interpretation of all laws of Parliament, but it cannot apply to the interpretation of the Constitution, because Article 367 was not amended and it was not laid down that the

General Clauses Act, as adapted or modified under any Article other than Article 372, will also apply to the interpretation of the Constitution. Since, until its amendment in 1956, Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act did not define

State"" as including Union Territories for purpose of interpretation of Article 54, the Union Territories cannot be treated as included in the word ""State"".

120. This view of the learned Judge does seem to have considerable force and it is also to be remembered that Hidayatullah, J. had doubted the correctness of the proposition laid down in Ram Kishore"s case on the ground that the

proper reference in it should have been to Article 372A, rather than to Article 372. However, we must refrain from making any comment because the issue whether or not the General Clause Act applies to the interpretation of the

Constitution is not properly before us in the facts and circumstances of the present case; what is more, no arguments have been canvassed before us on this issue. For the present, we can draw support from the observations in

Kanniyan"s case as affirmed in the Advance Insurance case to the effect that the definition in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act is repugnant to the subject and context of Article 246. We can, therefore, proceed on the assumption

that for our purposes, a Union Territory is not a State; we must, however, hasten to add that this assumption will be open to reconsideration subsequent to our analysis of the Constitutional scheme regarding the issue before us.

Interpretation of ""Union Taxation"" in Article 289(1) and scope of its ambit.

We may now address the central issue in the case which involves the determination of the ambit of Article 289(1). In order to appreciate the true import of the words used in this provision, it will be to our benefit to examine the

Constitutional history of Article 289 as well as that of its corollary, Article 285.

121. Articles 285 and 289 are modified versions of Sections 154 and 155 of the 1935 Act, as is obvious from a comparative study made in the earlier part of this judgment. While Articles 285 and 289 seek to provide reciprocal

immunities within the Republic of India to the Union and the States from each other"s taxing powers, Sections 154 and 155 strove to achieve the same result within British India in respect of the Federal Government on the one hand, and

the Governments of the Provinces and the Federated States on the other. However, in the process of adopting the provisions of the 1935 Act for our Constitution, a number of changes occurred and we must analyse some of these in

greater detail for they are extremely relevant for our purposes.

122. To appreciate the true import of Sections 154 and 155, it will be necessary to refer to a few provisions of the 1935 Act so as to obtain an understanding of its general scheme. Section 5 of the 1935 Act stated that the Federation of

India would comprise the Provinces, the Indian States and the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces. Section 6 defined a ''Federated State'' as an Indian State which had acceded to or might accede to the Federation. Section 94 provided a

list of the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces and stated that they would be administered by the Governor General acting through a Chief Commissioner. Section 99, which provided the manner in which legislative powers were to be

distributed between the Federal and Provincial legislatures, stated that the Federal Legislature was empowered to make laws for the whole or any part of British India or for any Federated State, while the Provincial Legislatures were

empowered to make laws for the provinces. Section 311(1) defined ''British India'' as ""All territories for the time being comprised within the Governor''s Provinces and the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces"". Section 100, which dealt with

the subject matter of Federal and Provincial laws provided that the Federal Legislature would have power to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in List I of the Seventh Schedule to the 1935 Act, which was to be called the

Federal Legislative List""; the Provincial Legislature would have powers to make laws in respect of matters in List II of the Seventh Schedule, called ""the Provincial Legislative List""; and, in respect of matters provided in List III of the

Seventh Schedule, called ""the Concurrent Legislative List"", both the Provincial and the Federal Legislature would have jurisdiction. Clause (4) of Section 100, which is of considerable importance for our purpose, provided in express

terms that the Federal Legislature would have ""power to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in the Provincial Legislative List except for a Province or any part thereof. It was, therefore, clearly contemplated that the Federal

Legislature would have the power to make laws for matters in the Provincial Legislative List in respect of the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces and the Federated States. Under the scheme of the 1935 Act, situations where the Federal

Legislature could enact laws with respect to matters in the Provincial Legislative List were, therefore, not considered to be rare or unusual.

123. While both the Federal Legislative List and the Provincial Legislative List contained entries allowing the levy of taxes, the Federal Legislative List did not contain any entry which allowed the Federal Legislature to levy taxes directly

on property. Entry 42 of the Provincial Legislative List empowered the Provincial Legislatures to levy taxes specifically on lands and buildings. The Concurrent Legislative List contained only one entry relating to taxes, namely, Entry 13

which referred to stamp duties.

124. Section 154, in material terms, provided that the property of the Federal Government would be exempt from all taxes imposed by Provinces and Federated States and the local authorities within them. The proviso added that, in the

absence of any federal law stipulating otherwise, those properties of the Federal Government which were subject to the levy of taxes before the commencement of part III of that Act would continue to be liable to pay them. The

exemption in Section 154, therefore, did not extend to such taxes, including taxes levied under Municipal laws. It is to be noted that Section 154 did not provide for an exemption in respect of the income of the Federal Government

Primarily because the Provinces lacked the legislative competence to enact laws levying taxes on income.

125. Section 155(1) stated that the Government of a Province and the ruler of a Federated State would not be liable to ""Federal Taxation"" in respect of ""lands or buildings situated in British India"". Proviso (a) stipulated that all the trading

and business activities carried on by Provinces and the Federated States outside their territorial jurisdiction would be subjected to Federal Taxation in British India. Proviso (b) stipulated that the personal property and income of a Ruler

of a Federated State would also be subject to Federal Taxation. Clause (2) of the Section being self-explanatory, does not require elucidation. In response to a query from us, Mr. Sen sought to find the reason for the existence of the

exemption in Section 155(1); it appears that the purpose was to avoid the liabilities imposed by Sections 3 and 9 of the Income Tax Act, 1912 upon the Provinces.

126. Comparing the text of Sections 154 and 155, it becomes clear that even under the scheme of the 1935 Act, the ambit of the reciprocal immunities was not equal in length and breadth; while Section 154 exempted the property of the

Federal Government from ""all taxes"", the Provincial Governments and Rulers of Federated States were entitled to an exemption only in respect of ""lands or buildings"" situated in British India and ""Income"" accruing thereof. This feature will

gain some importance when we deal with the comparative Constitutional position at a later stage.

127. The term ""Federal Taxation"" was not defined in the 1935 Act but some clue to its meaning can be discerned by referring to Sections 99 and 100 which described the legislative powers of the Federal Legislature. As we have already

seen, the Federal Legislative List did not allow the Federal Legislature to levy taxes on lands and buildings; in fact this subject was expressly included in the Provincial Legislative List. On the face of it, this would make the exemption in

Section 155 otiose. However, the confusion clears when one notices Clause (4) of Section 100 which expressly enables the Federal Legislature to legislate in respect of matters in the Provincial Legislative List for territories apart from the

Provinces. Viewed in this context, and taking into account the definition of ""British India"" in Section 311(1), Section 155 would have to be read as exempting the Governments of Provinces and the rulers of Federated States from

Federal Taxation"" in respect of lands or buildings situated in the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces. This is the only possible interpretation which will give meaning to the words of Section 155. Since, at the time to of the enactment of the

legislation, there were only six territories classified as Chief Commissioner''s Provinces, the exemption could not be said to be at par with the exemption provided in Section 154 but, all the same, in terms of the revenue amount involved, it

could not be considered insignificant either. It therefore becomes clear that, under the scheme of the 1935 Act, ""Federal Taxation"" included taxes leviable by the Federal Government in the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces and that the

Properties of the Provinces and the Rulers of the Federated States situated within these Chief Commissioners Provinces would be exempt from such ""Federal Taxation"". It remains to be seen whether the position came to be changed

during the process of transformation of these sections into the existing provisions of the Constitution.

128. In the earlier stages of the framing of the Constitution, the issue of financial relations between the center and the units was addressed by two Committees-the Union Powers Committee and the Union Constitution Committee. These

Committees recommended that the schemes envisaged by the 1935 Act should be generally followed. In the Draft Constitution prepared by the Constitutional Adviser, Sri B.N. Rau, in October 1947. Clauses 205 and 207 were

modified versions of Sections 154 and 155. On October 2, 1947, an Expert Committee on Financial Provisions was appointed to make recommendations as to the provisions on the subject to be embodied in the new Constitution after

taking into account the views of the States and also the Draft prepared by the Constitutional Adviser. The Drafting Committee of the Constitution took up the issue in January 1948 and took into consideration the Drafts prepared by the

Constitutional Adviser as also the Expert Committee on Financial Provision. Thereafter, these provisions came to be numbered as Articles 264 and 266 of the Draft Constitution. After the Constituent Assembly had considered the matter

at length and formally approved these provisions, they came to be renumbered as Article 285 and 289.

129. The present Article 285 is much the same as its predecessor Section 145 and, though there were some changes in its text as the provision charted its course through the stages enumerated above, not being relevant for our purposes,

we shall ignore its discussion.

130. The present Article 289 was Clause 207 in the Draft Constitution prepared by the Constitutional Adviser. It provided that the Government of a unit would not be liable to Federal Taxation in respect of lands or buildings situated

within the territories of the Federation or income accruing, arising or received within such territories; the two exception provided were in favour of (a) any income accruing to a unit''s Government through trade or business and (b) the

personal property or the personal income of the Ruler of Indian State. As we have observed, u/s 155, the Provinces and Federated States were liable to taxation only in respect of trade and business operations carried on by them outside

their own territories. To that extent Clause 207 had made a substantial departure. The Constitutional Adviser relied on the decisions of the Supreme Court to the United States of America in Me Culloch v. Maryland 4 L.Ed. 579 (1890)

and South Carolina v. United States (1905) 199 U.S. 437 to buttress his stance that the Federation should have the power to tax the units, but not vice versa for the reason that when the Federation taxed the instrumentalities of the units,

it taxed its constituents, whereas when a unit taxed the operations of the Federal Government, it acted upon instrumentalities created, not by its own constituents, but by people over whom it could claim no control.

131. The Expert Committee on Financial Provisions approved the Constitutional Adviser''s recommendation that the trading operations of the units, as also of local bodies, whether carried on within or without their jurisdiction should be

liable to central taxation; they, however, suggested that quasi-trading operations incidental to the normal functions of Government should be exempt from such taxation.

132. When the Drafting Committee took up the matter, it duly noted the recommendations of the Constitutional Adviser and the Expert Committee and, in July 1949, convened a Premier''s Conference to discuss these provisions. Draft

Article 266 came in for a lot of criticism and a number of States suggested that insofar as Article 266 did not exempt the trading and business operations of State Governments from Union Taxation, it be dispensed with altogether. Other

suggestions were also forwarded to the Drafting Committee : a number of States were of the view that the provision was inequitable and one-sided insofar as it sought to subject trade and business operations of the State Government to

Union Taxation, while under Article 264, States were debarred from taxing the property of the Union. Such a provision, it was felt, was bound to retard the industrial development of the Provinces taking away the incentive for State

enterprise.

133. Reconsidering he provisions in the light of the comments of the Provincial Governments, the Drafting Committee decided, in consultation with the Central Ministry of Finance, to introduce some important changes in Article 266. The

ambit of the exemption in Clause (1) was expanded by including ''property'' instead of ''lands or buildings'' thereby bringing within its purview, movable property as well. On the issue of trade and business, a provision similar to the present

Article 289(2) was included. This provision would enable Parliament to pass a law to declare which of the trading and business activities of the States were to be classified as ordinary functions of the Government allowing them to be

exempted, and making the rest of the activities liable to tax. Draft Article 266 was considered by the Constituent Assembly on September 9, 1949. Some members representing the States of Travancore-Cochin and Mysore expressed

apprehensions that Union Taxation of industrial and commercial activities would check the expansion of industrialisation and would reduce the capacity of State to discharge their ordinary governmental functions. Mr. P.T. Chacko from

Travancore-Cochin referred to the principle of immunity from intergovernmental taxation as it stood in the United States of America and the fact of its incorporation in Draft Article 264; he sought the extension of the doctrine to States as

well. While allaying their apprehensions, Mr. Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar noted the fact that the Australian, Canadian and American Constitutions had incorporated the principle of intergovernmental immunities. He stated that the

Australian and Canadian experiences were irrelevant for the purpose of the Indian Constitution for, when they were drafted, it was not envisaged that large schemes of socialisation would be implemented. Referring to the American

position, he pointed out that even within that jurisdiction, the doctrine had begun to lose favour and was in the process of being discarded. Thereafter, he observed that under the provision as it was placed before the Constituent

Assembly, Parliament was left with the option of making the law which would declare those trading and business operations of the States which would be liable to Union Taxation after taking into account the general interests of trade and

industry of the whole country and other democratic factOrs. He therefore felt that the provision was ""very salutary"". Subsequently, following the reassurances given by the Central Finance Minister, the amendments were withdrawn and

Draft Article 266 was accepted in toto. (Note : For a study of evolution of Articles 285 and 289 within the Constituent Assembly, See B. Shiva Rao, The Framing of the Indian Constitution :A Study, N.M. Tripathi Pvt. Ltd., Bombay

(1968) pp. 649-99; for reference to original documents, See B. Shiva Rao, ibid, Vols. III & IV).

134. Mr. P.P. Rao and the other learned Counsel appearing for the State have argued before us that the present Articles 285 and 289 are based on the U.S. doctrine of reciprocal immunity of instrumentalities which has also been

incorporated in the Canadian and Australian Constitution, apart from certain other Constitutions. Before we begin to examine the text of Article 285 and 289 with a view to finding a solution to the Constitutional conundrum posed by the

case before us, we must analyse this proposition closely.

135. The doctrine of inter-governmental immunity has been the subject of some controversy in the country of its origin, the United States of America. The origin of this doctrine is ascribed to the judgment of Chief Justice John Marshall in

the case of Me Culloch v. Maryland (supra). However, as pointed out by commentators, on the facts of the case, where a State Tax sought to be levied on a Federal Bank was held to be void, the decision was more in favour or

declaring the supremacy of the Federal Government than of upholding the rights of States. It was, therefore, the basis for establishing federal immunity from State Taxation. However, later decisions interpreted the judgment to hold that its

corollary, that the property of States would be exempt from Federal Taxation was equally applicable; more than 50 years after the decision in Me Culloch''s case, the Supreme Court, in Collector v. Day 11 Wall. 113 (1871) made the

theory of inter-governmental immunity reciprocal. The doctrine, as propounded in Collector v. Day, was never applied widely and, in subsequent years, underwent significant modifications. In The South Carolina case, which was the

second case relied upon by the Constitutional Adviser in preparing Clause 207 of his Draft Constitution, the Supreme Court dealt a further blow to the concept of immunity of State from Federal Taxation, when it held that South Carolina

was bound to pay a National Excise Tax on liquor-dealers which was being levied by the Federal Government. The Supreme Court drew a distinction between State functions which were strictly governmental and those which were

commercial in nature; it was held that the governmental functions of State would be immune from taxation but when the States entered into ordinary business, no immunity would exist. This created fresh problems and over time, several

Judges of the Supreme Court protested against the illogical distinction between governmental and business activities, calling for a complete re-examination of the entire doctrine. In later years, the doctrine was considerably modified. In

recent years, the Supreme Court has come to recognise a narrower tax immunity for the States than for the National Government on the basis of a theory that combines the principle of national supremacy with the argument that the

interests of States received more representation in Congress than national interest received in State Legislature. It is to be noted that we have had this position from the time that the Constitution was originally enacted.

136. As we have already noticed, the Constitutional Adviser relied upon the decisions in Me Culloch''s case and The South Carolina case, for justifying the reduction in the ambit of the immunity of State from Union Taxation rather than

for establishing reciprocal immunity between the States and the Union. Furthermore, in the Constituent Assembly, Mr. Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar had doubted the applicability of the doctrine to the Indian Constitution and had instead

commended the present scheme whereby the troublesome issue of determining which of the trading and business operations of state should be subject to Union Taxation has been left to Parliament; while enacting such a law Parliament

would be forced to cater to the interests of the States on account of the presence of their representatives in it. The usefulness of any further discussion on the applicability of this doctrine to the Indian Constitution is rendered questionable

by virtue of the fact that this Court had, on earlier occasions, rejected it. In 279361 , Sinha, C.J., speaking for the majority in a six-Judge Constitution Bench expressly held (at p. 407) that the doctrine of immunity of instrumentalities had

been rejected by the Privy Council as inapplicable to the Canadian and Australian Constitutions and having practically been given up in the United States, it was equally inapplicable to the Indian Constitution. In the APSRTC case (supra),

at p. 24, the Court rejected the contention of the Advocate-General of Andhra Pradesh urging it to adopt the American doctrine, by relying upon these observations of Sinha, C.J.

137. It is, therefore, clear that in seeking a solution to the problem faced by us, we must rely primarily on the bare text of Articles 285 and 289. Comparing these provisions, it becomes evident that the Constitution does envisage some

form of inter-governmental immunity. Article 285(1), while exempting the property of the Union from all taxes, does not attempt to provide an exemption in respect of income as the States do not possess legislative competence to levy

taxes on income as such; however, taxes relating to income that have a bearing on property such as the taxes on agricultural income levied by using Entry 46 of the State List will also be exempt in view of the wide-ranging all embracing

nature of the exemption. Article 285(2) saves, until Parliament by law decides otherwise, all pre-Constitutional taxes applicable to Union property.

138. With respect to Article 289, we have already examined the manner in which this provision was analysed by this Court in the APSRTC case. We are in agreement with the proposition that the three clauses of Article 289 are

interlinked, in that, Clause (3) is an exception to Clause (2) which in turn is exception to Clause (1). As we have noticed for ourselves, the framers of the Constitution had consciously conferred Parliament with the option of deciding which

of the trading and business activities of the States would be subject to the levy of Union taxes. So, while Article 289(1) generally exempts the property and income of the Sates from Union taxation, Clauses (2) and (3) grant to Parliament

the aforementioned prerogatives.

139. Having understood the scheme of Articles 285 and 289, we must sharply focus on the specific wording of Article 289(1) and, in particular, on the meaning of the phrase ""Union Taxation"". It may be noted that the phrase ""Union

Taxation"" appears in only two places in the entire Constitution in the marginal heading of Article 289 and in the main text of Article 289(1). It is suggested that some guidance may be obtained by analysing the term"" State Taxation"" which

appears in the marginal heading of Article 285 and has been described in the text of Article 285(1) as ""all taxes imposed by a State"". On that reasoning, ""Union Taxation"" would mean ""all taxes imposed by the Union"".

140. The word ""taxation"" has been defined in Article 366(28) which states that unless the context otherwise requires, the word ""taxation"" includes ""the imposition of any tax or impost, whether general or local or special and, ''tax"" shall be

construed accordingly"". This definition was accepted by Das. J. and Hidayatullah, J. in their minority opinions (at pp. 834-35 and 893-94 respectively) in the Sea Customs case for interpreting Article 289(1). However, Sinha, C.J., in his

majority opinion (at pp. 923-34), rejected the application of this definition to Article 289(1) as, in his opinion, the context of Article 289(1) precluded the application of the definition. Rajagopala Ayyangar, J., in his separate majority

opinion (at pp. 921-93), also felt that the definition would not apply. We concur with the majority view in the Sea Customs case that the definition of ""taxation"" provided in Article 366(28) will not apply for the purpose of interpreting

Article 289(1).

141. Our attention has been drawn towards the provisions contained in Part XII of the Constitution which has a bearing on the scheme of the Constitution with respect to financial relations between the Union and the States. Since this

aspect and its relevance to Article 289(1) was discussed at length in the Sea Customs case, we may advert to those observations. Das, J. (at p. 852), was of the opinion that the provisions of Part XII of the Constitution would have no

bearing on the import of Articles 285 and 289 which ought to be construed on their own terms. Sinha, C.J., however, analysed these provisions at length and the relevant observations in this behalf may be reproduced

It will thus appear that Part XII of the Constitution has made elaborate provisions as to the revenues of the Union and of the States, and as to how the Union will share the proceeds of duties and taxes imposed by it and collected either

by the Union or by the States. Sources of revenue which have been allocated to the Union are not meant entirely for the purposes of the Union but have to be distributed according to the principles laid down by Parliamentary legislation

as contemplated by the Articles aforesaid. Thus all the taxes and duties levied by the Union and collected either by the Union or by the State do not form part of the Consolidated Fund of India but many of those taxes and duties are

distributed amongst the States and from part of the Consolidated Fund of the States. Even those taxes and duties which constitute the Consolidated Fund of India may be used for the purposes of supplementing the revenues of the States

in accordance with their needs.... The financial arrangement and adjustment suggested in Part XII of the Constitution has been designed by the Constitution makers in such a way as to ensure an equitable distribution of the revenues

between the Union and the States, even though those revenues may be derived from taxes and duties imposed by the Union and collected by it or through the agency of the States.... It will thus be seen that the powers of taxation assigned

to the Union are based mostly on considerations of convenience of imposition and collection and not with a view to allocate them solely to the Union; that is to say, it was not intended that all taxes and duties imposed by the Union

Parliament should be expended on the activities of the center and not on the activities of the States.... The resources of the Union Government are not meant exclusively for the benefit of the Union activities; they are also meant for

subsidising the activities of the States in accordance with their respective needs, irrespective of the amounts collected by or through them. In other words, the Union and the State together form one organic whole for the purpose of

utilisation of the resources of the territories of India as a whole.

142. We are of the view that an analysis of some of the provisions in Part XI, Chapter I of the Constitution, which deals with the legislative relations between the Union and the States will be crucial to the determination of the central issue

in this case. We may first notice certain provisions in the Constitution which enable Parliament to make laws for subjects contained in the State List, to which our attention was drawn by counsel for the appellants as also the learned

Attorney General. We must note that these provisions conceive of extraordinary situations. Article 249 provides for a situation where, if the Council of States declare by a resolution that it is necessary in the national interest to do so,

Parliament may make laws in respect of matters enumerated in the State List. Article 250 empowers Parliament to make laws for the whole or any part of India in respect of matters enumerated in the State List while a Proclamation of

Emergency is in operation. Article 252 empowers Parliament to make laws with respect to matters enumerated in the State List if two or more states resolve that such course of action is desirable. Article 253 reserves to Parliament the

exclusive power to make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or any decision made at any international conference, association or any other

body. The emergency provisions outlined in Part XVIII of the Constitution and comprising Articles 352 to 360 conceive of special situations in which Parliament is empowered to enact laws on matters in List II.

143. It has been urged that when Parliament legislates for Union Territories in exercise of powers under Article 246(4), it is a situation similar to those enumerated above and is to be treated as an exceptional situation, not forming part of

the ordinary constitutional scheme and hence falling outside the ambit of ""Union Taxation"". Having analysed the scheme of Part VIII of the Constitution including the changes brought into it, we are of the view that despite the fact that, of

late, Union Territories have been granted greater powers, they continue to be very much under the control and supervision of the Union Government for their governance. Some clue as to the reasons for the recent amendments in Part

VIII may be found in the observations of this Court in Ramesh Birch''s case, which we have extracted earlier. It is possible that since Parliament may not have enough time at its disposal to enact entire volumes of legislations for certain

Union Territories, it may decide, at least in respect of those Union Territories whose importance is enhanced on account of the size of their territories and their geographical location, that they should be given more autonomy in legislative

matters. However, these changes will not have the effect of making such Union Territories as independent as the States. This point is best illustrated by referring to the case of the National capital Territory of Delhi which is today a Union

Territory and enjoys the maximum autonomy on account of the fact that it has a Legislature created by the Constitution. However, Clauses 3(b) and 3(c) of Article 239-AA make it abundantly clear that the plenary power to legislate

upon matter affecting Delhi still vests with Parliament as it retains the power to legislate upon any matter relating to Delhi and, in the event of any repugnancy, it is the Parliamentary law which will prevail. It is, therefore, clear that Union

Territories are in fact under the supervision of the Union Government and it cannot be contended that their position is akin to that of the States. Having analysed the relevant Constitutional provisions as also the applicable precedents, we

are of the view that under the scheme of the Indian Constitution, the position of the Union Territories cannot be equated with that of the States. Though they do have a separate identity within the Constitutional framework, this will not

enable them to avail of the privileges available to the States.

144. It has been urged before us that the phrase ""Union Taxation"" has to be interpreted in the context of Article 246, which deals with the subject matter of laws made by Parliament and the State Legislatures, and that the context of

Union Taxation"" should be limited to those matters falling within Articles 246(1), where Parliament has the legislative competence to levy taxes with respect to matters enumerated in the union List. We see no reason why such a limiting

principle must be read into the definition of the phrase ""Union Taxation"". In our view, the term can and should be given the widest amplitude, allowing it to encompass all taxes that are levied by the authority of Parliamentary laws. Though

the amplitude of the term ""Union Taxation"" was not expressly before the Court in the Sea Customs case, it is clear from an analysis of the majority judgments that the learned Judges considered the term ""Union Taxation"" to mean all taxes

leviable by the Union. As Clause (4) of Article 246 itself envisages situations where Parliament is to make laws in respect of matters in the State List, it cannot be said that this is a rare or an unusual circumstance. The Constitution does

not contain any provisions which would indicate that the definition of ""Union Taxation"" should be restrictively interpreted so as to be within the confines of Article 246(1). The specific-situations envisaged in Articles 249, 250, 252, 253

and the Emergency Provisions in Part XVIII of the Constitution do not make for the creation of any anomalous situations. These Articles, which provide for unusual exercises of Parliamentary power involving the matters enumerated in the

State List, can be regarded as exceptions to the general rule. We are, therefore, of the view that, unless the context requires otherwise-as in the case of Articles 249, 250, 252, 253 and the Emergency Provisions in Part XVIII of the

Constitution the broad definition of ""Union Taxation"" embracing all taxes leviable by Parliament ought to be accepted for the purpose of interpreting Article 289(1).

145. As already noticed by us, under the scheme of the 1935 Act, those lands or buildings of the Provinces and Federated States which were situated within the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces were, by virtue of Section 155(1),

exempted from Federal Taxation. There can be no dispute about such a construction of the provision for, otherwise, the exemption in Section 155(1) would have no meaning. Section 155(1) formed the basis for the present Article

289(1) and, having closely examined the various stages by which Article 289(1) replaced Section 155(1), we find that this position was never sought to be deviated from. The presumption therefore, its that it was the intention of the

framers of the Constitution to maintain the status quo with respect to the position regarding the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces which are now called ""Union Territories"". That presumption is further reinforced by the general scheme of

the Constitution which furthers the interpretation that we have sought to give to Article 289(1) and its applicability in respect of the Union Territories.

146. Unlike other Federations, the Union of India has a sizeable territory of its own comprising the Union Territories which have been specified in the First Schedule to the Constitution. Therefore, the limited reciprocal inter-governmental

immunity bestowed by the Constitution in Articles 285 and 289 is given fuller meaning by virtue of the adoption of the wider meaning of ""Union Taxation""; this would mean that, just as the properties of the Union are exempt from taxes on

property leviable by the States, the properties of the States will also be exempt from taxes on property leviable by the Union in areas falling within its territorial jurisdiction.

147. While attempting to demonstrate that the reasoning of Sinha, C.J. in the Sea Customs case was incorrect insofar as his acceptance of the contention that Article 246(4) enables Parliament to levy taxes directly on property was

concerned, Mr. B. Sen contended that Article 246(4) was not in the contemplation of the framers of the Constitution when they carved out the exemption in favour of the property of the States from Union Taxation; he then proceeded to

cite examples of specific circumstances in which Parliament can levy taxes directly on property which, according to him, was what the framers had intended to exempt under Article 289(1). He drew our attention to Entry 3 of the Union

List (""Delimitation of Cantonment areas, local self-government in such areas, the Constitution and powers within such areas of cantonment authorities and the regulation of home accommodation (including the control of rents) in such

areas"") and stated that by virtue of this on entry, Parliament is rendered competent to levy taxes on the use or occupation of properties located within areas declared as Cantonments. He then referred to Entry 54 of the Union List

(""Regulation of mines and mineral development to the extent to which such regulation and development under the control of the Union is declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest"") and to the Mines and Minerals

(Regulation & Development) Act, 1956 which together empower Parliament to levy taxes on mines and minerals which would be in the nature of a tax on property. Referring to Entry 49 of the Union List (""Patents, Inventions and

Designs; copyright; trade-marks and merchandise marks""), Mr. Sen contended that since these subjects are regarded as intangible or incorporeal properties, taxes levied by Parliament upon them would also amount to taxes on property.

Additionally, Mr. Sen has referred to the following Entiries in the Union Lists : Entries 24 & 25 (relating to Shipping activities), Entry 47 (""Insurance""), Entry 52 (""Industries, the control of which by the Union is declared by Parliament by

law to be in the public interest"") : to demonstrate that Parliament does have power to levy taxes directly on property.

148. Mr. A.K. Ganguli controverted Mr. Sen''s contention in this respect; he argued that Entry 3 of the Union List does not contemplate the levy of taxes by Parliament. With respect to Entries 47 & 54, he argued that these entries would

be covered by Article 289(2) of the Constitution. The same contention would, presumably, be applicable in respect of the other entries cited by Mr. Sen.

149. In our opinion, there is no warrant for an authoritative pronouncement upon this aspect for, even if we assume that Mr. Sen''s contention is correct and that all these Entries do in fact empower Parliament to levy taxes directly on

property, it would not in any way detract from the correctness of our interpretation that the levy of taxes under Article 246(4) is covered by the phrase ""Union Taxation"" in Article 289(1); these Entries would then provide additional areas

in respect of which the States can claim exemption from Union Taxation under Article 289(1), thus lending greater weight to the solemnity and the actual worth, in real terms, of the phraseology of Article 289(1).

150. However, we find ourselves unable to agree with Mr. Sen when he contends that the entries cited by him were the only instances kept in contemplation by the framers at the time of the drafting of Article 289(1). If that were so, the

ambit of the exemption would traverse an extremely narrow field which would then lend credence to the observation of Das, J. in the Sea Customs case, albeit made in the converse context, that the exemption in Article 289(1) would

amount to ""much ado about nothing"".

Classification of taxes imposed by Municipalities

151. We may now turn to Mr. Sen''s alternative submission that the taxes levied by the NDMC under the Act would not be covered by the exemption in Article 289(1) as that provision cannot be construed to encompass Municipal

Taxes.

152. To appreciate this contention, we will be required to analyse certain provisions of the Act as also those of the Constitution. Section 61 of the Act, which is the charging Section, at the relevant time, empowered the Municipality to

levy a tax payable by the owner on lands and buildings subject to, and to the extent of, the qualifying conditions provided therein. It is clear from an analysis of this provision that it provides for the levy of a consolidated tax, combining

within it the tax element and the service element. Section 51 of the Act provides for the Constitution of a Municipal fund and states that all sums received by the Municipal Committee are to be credited to it. Section 52 of the Act provides

the manner in which the sums collected in the Municipal Funds are to be applied by the Municipal Committee. Our attention has also been drawn towards analogous provisions in the New Delhi Municipal Committee Act and the Delhi

Municipal Committee Act to form the foundation of the argument that, under all these legislations, the Municipalities have been vested with a great deal of financial autonomy; they have the power to fix their own budgets, levy taxes within

prescribed limits, collect the proceeds of such imposition which are to be diverted to Municipal Funds which function entirely under the supervision of the Committees. It is argued that such a stance is further reinforced by the introduction

of Part IXA into the Constitution which allows for Municipalities to be vested with substantial powers, including the power to tax, thereby providing Constitutional support. The argument, therefore, is that now that the Constitution itself

recognises Municipal taxes as a separate category of taxes, they should not be construed to fall within the exemption provided by Article 289(1). Another limb of this submission is that while under Article 285, taxes imposed by any

authority within a State"", which would necessarily include Municipal taxes, have been expressly exempted, Article 289 does not provide for any such facility and, to that extent, taxes levied by Municipalities within the Union Territories

are not covered by the exemption in Article 289(1).

153. We have great difficulty in accepting this assertion. Article 265 of the Constitution emphatically mandates that ""no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law"". Under the framework of the Constitution there are two

principal bodies which have been vested with plenary powers to make laws, these being the Union Legislature, which is described by Article 79 as ""Parliament for the Union"" and the State Legislatures, which are described by Article 168

in the singular as ""Legislature of a State"". While certain other bodies have been vested with legislative power, including the power of levying taxes, by the Constitution for specific purpose, as in the case of District Committees and

Regional Councils constituted under the aegis of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, the plenary power to legislate, especially in matters relating to revenue, still vests with the Union and the State Legislatures. Even if the submission that

Municipalities now possess, under Part IXA of the Constitution, a higher juridical status is correct, the extension of that logic to the proposition that they have plenary powers to levy taxes is not, as is clear from a perusal of relevant part

of Article 243X of the Constitution which reads as under:

243X. Power to impose taxes by, and Funds of, the Municipalities.-The Legislature of a State may, by Law,-

(a) authorise a Municipality to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls and fees in accordance with such procedure and subject to such limits;

(b) ...

(c) ...

(d) ...

as may be specified in law.

154. Article 243ZB provides that this provision will be applicable to Union Territories and the reference to the legislature of a State would apply, in relation to a Union Territory having a Legislative Assembly, to that Legislative Assembly.

155. It is, therefore, clear that even under the new scheme, Municipalities do not have an independent power to levy taxes. Although they can now be granted more substantial powers than ever before, they continue to be dependent

upon their parent Legislatures for the bestowal of such privileges. In the case of Municipalities within States, they have to be specifically delegated the power to tax by the concerned State Legislature. In Union Territories which do not

have Legislative Assemblies of their own, such a power would have to be delegated by Parliament. Of the rest, those which have Legislative Assemblies of their own would have to specifically empower Municipalities within them with the

power to levy taxes.

156. We have already held that despite that fact that certain Union Territories have Legislative Assemblies of their own, they are very much under the supervision of the Union Government and cannot be said to have an independent

status. Under our Constitutional scheme, all taxation must fall within either of two categories : State Taxation or Union Taxation. Since it is axiomatic that taxes levied by authorities within a State would amount to State taxation, it would

appear that the words ""or by any authority within a State"" have been added in Article 285(1) by way of abundant caution. It could also be that these words owe their presence in the provision to historical reasons; it may be noted that

Section 154 of the 1935 Act was similarly worded. The fact that Article 289(1), which in its phraseology is different from Section 155 of the 1935 Act having been drafted by the Drafting Committee to meet specific objections, does not

contain words similar to those in Article 285(1), will not in any way further the case of the appellant, because the phrase ""Union Taxation"" will encompass Municipal taxes levied by Municipalities in Union Territories.

157. Before we part, we must refer to Part IV of the judgment of Jeevan Reddy, J. where Clause (2) of Article 289 has been invoked to validate the levy of taxes under the Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act upon those

properties of State Governments which are being occupied for commercial or trade purposes.

158. At the outset, we must express our great reluctance to deal with this proposition, for it is not based on any contention advanced by any of the counsel who appeared before us, either in their written pleadings or in their oral

submissions. This is not because we feel constrained to restrict ourselves to the parameters prescribed by the submissions of counsel, but because we feel that the opposite side did not have a fair opportunity to answer the line of

reasoning adopted in that behalf. The view taken by Reddy, J. has the effect of imposing considerable tax liabilities upon the properties of the State Governments and, in our view, it would only be proper that their views in this behalf be

obtained before visiting them with such liability. We have only the rule of caution in mind which warns that ordinarily, courts should, particularly in constitutional matters, refrain from expressing opinions on points not raised or not fully and

effectively argued by counsel on either side.

159. Be that as it may, we must, for the record, express ourselves on the view taken by Reddy, J. after closely examining it. Reddy, J. begins his examination of the issue by noting that the Act, the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and

the New Delhi Municipal Committee Act contain specific provisions exempting the properties of the Union from local taxation in accordance with Article 285. It is then Stated that since none of these Acts contain similar exemptions in

favour of the properties of States, it is clear that they purport to levy taxes on them. This is followed by the observation that though the States seek an exemption from such levies on the basis of Clause (1) of Article 289, as per the ratio

of the APSRTC case, Clause (1) has to be read in the context of Clauses (2) and (3) of that Article. This would, it is stated, lead to the consequence that if a Parliamentary law within the meaning of Clause (2) of Article 289 is made, the

area covered by that law would be removed from the field occupied in Clause (1); for support, an analogy is drawn from the decision in R.C. Cooper v. Union of India [1970] 1 SCR 248

160. Thereafter, the meaning and scope of Article 289 as well as its underlying objective are ascertained by contrasting it with Section 155 of the 1935 Act. The use of the words ""lands and buildings"" in Section 155(1) is analysed to

arrive at the conclusion that these words were included to empower the federal legislature to levy taxes on lands and buildings situated within the Chief Commissioner''s Provinces. It is then noted that Article 289 uses the wider expression

''property'', but that the same reasoning holds good for the present Union Territories, making the property and income of States situated within Union Territories exempt from ""Union Taxation"". With respect to the proviso to Section

155(1), it is observed that the provision was automatically applicable on its own force. It did not define the trading and business operations of Provincial Governments, nor did it specify which of these operations would be subject to

Federal Taxation. It is then stated that the same position continues in Article 289 with the only difference being the requirement of a enactment of a law by Parliament in this behalf. Thereafter, it is observed that the exemption in Clause (1)

of Article 289 is subject to Clause (2) of Article 289. Clause (2) is analysed and interpreted as clarifying Clause (1) to the extent that the exemption upon the income of Provincial Government operates only when such income is carried

on for the purpose of governmental functions and not for trade and business activities, carried on with the profit motive. It is stated that though ""trade and business"" ordinarily has a very wide and ambiguous meaning (certain English and

Indian authorities are cited to illustrate this point), but, for the purpose of Clause (2) of Article 289, they have to be given a restricted meaning. It is, therefore, stated that under Article 289(2), the trading and business activities of State

Governments, which are carried on with the profit motive, will be liable to tax and cannot avail to the exemptions in Article 289(1).

161. Clause (2) is further analysed and is interpreted as having been included for the purpose of removing the trading and business activities of State Governments from the purview of the exemption in Clause (1). However, it is stated,

such a removal is not automatic and is dependent upon the enactment of a Parliamentary Law which impose taxes on specified trading and business activities of State Governments.

162. Thereafter, the question whether Parliament has, in exercise of powers under Article 289(2), imposed taxes on the trading and business activities of State Governments, is sought to be addressed. In this respect, the Act, the New

Delhi Municipal Committee Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, which are deemed to be post-Constitutional enactments, are examined. It is noted that while these enactments contain specific exemptions in favour of properties

of the Union and also exempt properties used for "charitable purposes" and "public worship", they do not exempt properties of State Governments. It is stated that the latter omission must be deemed to be deliberate. Thereafter, it is

stated that two views are possible in this regard. The first is to adopt the position that since neither of these enactments are purported to have been made under Article 289(2), they should not be treated as having been enacted for that

purpose and, consequently, should be held to be incapable to levying taxes on any property, whether occupied for government for governmental or trading purposes, of the State Governments. The second view, which Reddy, J. adopts,

is to take the position that the Doctrine of Presumption of Constitutionality of Legislations points in favour of holding that the Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act are laws made by Parliament under Article 289(2), and taxes

imposed by them upon the properties occupied for trading and business activities by State Governments would be valid and effective. A number of decisions of this Court are cited to show the jurisprudential basis of this tool of

Constitutional interpretation. It is pointed out that though neither of these legislations purport to have been made under Article 289(2), but, since this is normal practice in that no legislation specifies the provision of the Constitution that it is

enacted under, this fact need not be over-emphasised. It is, therefore, held that the levy of property taxes by these enactments is valid to the extent that it relates to lands and buildings owned by State Governments and used by them for

trade and business purposes. (In an earlier part of the opinion, the difficulty in drawing a distinction between governmental and business functions is noted and an example in respect of guesthouses maintained by State Governments is

supplied). Thereafter, it is stated that it is for the ""appropriate assessing authority"" to determine ""which land/building falls within which category in accordance with law and take appropriate further action"". It is then stated that since, under

these enactments, the assessing authorities are required to decide several difficult questions as to what amounts to "charitable purpose" etc., the obligation imposed by such directions would not prove to be too onerous to discharge.

Reddy, J. sums up the issue by recommending to the Union that it consider granting total exemption in favour of all properties of State Government.

163. We are of the opinion that of the two possible views expressed by Reddy, J., it is the first which ought to be preferred. We think that the second view is fraught with several difficulties. Such a construction, while being violative of the

scheme envisaged by the framers of the Constitution, may well result in a situation that was sought to be avoided by them. The directions may also lead to grave practical difficulties; moreover since the effect of the directions would be to

vest the executive authorities with substantial policy making powers, their issuance might well be offensive to established principles of delegation of powers.

164. We shall now set out the reasons which cause us to so think; in doing so, we may have to revisit some of the ground that has already been traversed by us, but the repetition can be justified by narrower focus that will now be

imparted to those aspects.

165. Articles 285 and 289, and their predecessors in the 1935 Act, owe their origin to the American doctrine of Inter-governmental Tax Immunity. This doctrine was enunciated in the case of Me Culloch v. Maryland (supra). However,

the doctrine was substantially modified by the decision in South Carolina v. United States (supra) which drew a distinction between strictly governmental and business functions of governments. In the latter case, it was held that the

governmental functions of State Governments would be exempt from Federal Taxation but their commercial functions would be subject to the levy of Federal Taxes. This case imposed upon Courts the heavy burden of determining in

specific cases when a particular function was or was not governmental. A number of conflicting decisions were rendered and caused a great deal of confusion as to which of the activities of governments were to be classified as "business"

or "proprietary" and were, therefore to be liable to Federal Taxation. The controversy was set at rest by a unanimous decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in New York v. United States 326 U.S. 572 90 L. ED. 326 (1946) wherein it

was concluded that the artificial distinction between governmental and proprietary/business functions of States was unworkable and required to be abandoned.

166. The difficulty in determining the distinction between a governmental unction and a trading or business function of the State has also been felt and recognised in Australia. In South Australia v. Commonwealth (1942) 65 C.L.R. 373

the changing character of government functions of the State was noted and it was held that, ""In a fully self-government country where a Parliament determines legislative policy and an executive government carries it out, any activity may

become a function of government if Parliament so determines"" (supra) at p. 423). The Court in this decision came to the conclusion that the best way to avoid the controversy was to allow Parliament to decide, by law, which of the

activities of the State would be classified as relating to business and would consequently be liable to taxation.

167. Under the predecessor of Article 289, i.e., under proviso (a) to Sections 155(1) of the 1935 Act, the Federal Government was empowered to levy taxes on lands and buildings of Provincial Governments used by them for trade or

business. The provision itself vested the Federal Government with the power to levy such taxes and there was no requirement for the enactment of a specific law in that behalf. This position continued till the Constitution came into force.

168. When Sir B.N. Rao prepared his Draft Constitution, Clause 207 (present Article 289) was drafted on the basis of Section 155 of the 1935 Act. An attempt was made to incorporate the U.S. position prevailing after the decision in

the South Carolina case (supra) by stipulating that all trading activities of State Governments would be liable to Union Taxation. However, even under this provision, the powers to tax was automatic and did not require a specific law.

(See : A Note on certain clauses by the Constitutional Adviser, B. Shiva Rao, Vol. III, p. 197 at pp. 204-205.

169. The Expert Committee on Financial Provisions, however, recommended that quasi-trading activities of State Governments should be exempt from Union Taxation. .

170. Even when the Drafting Committee incorporated the provision as Draft Article 266 and subsequently modified it, there was no stipulation for a law before the power to tax could be exercised. (See the text of Draft Article 266, B.

Shiva Rao, Vol. IV, p. 676). At the Premier''s Conference held in July, 1949, the provision met with severe criticism. The Premier of the United Province suggested that all trading and business activities of State Governments be exempt

from Union Taxation. Several other Provinces also made similar representations. Based on these representations. The Drafting Committee made a substantial change in the text of Draft Article 266. A provision similar to the present

Article 289(2), whereby Parliament would have the power to determine which of the trading and business activities of State Governments would be liable to Union Taxation was incorporated. (See : Revised draft by the Ministry of

Finance, B. Shiva Rao, Vol. IV pp. 731-732.

171. When Draft Article 266 was discussed in the Assembly, a number of members expressed fears that Union Taxation of commercial activities of State Governments would check the expansion of industrialisation and reduce the

capacity of States to perform their ordinary functions. They, therefore, demanded that the trading and business activities of State Governments be exempt from Union Taxation. Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar sought to allay these

apprehensions by making an elaborate statement, the relevant part of which is quoted below (Constituent Assembly Debates, Vol. IX, pp. 1167-69):

...It is a permissive power that is given to Parliament under the section. There is no duty cast upon Parliament to levy a tax and I am sure in the larger interest of trade and industry, Parliament will certainly not go to the length of taxing

industries which have been thriving.... So far as the United States is concerned in the early days though there was no express provision through the medium of the doctrine of Instrumentality, they held that the State cannot tax the Federal

Government and the Federal Government cannot tax the State instrumentality because both are parts of a single composite mechanism and if you permit one to tax the other, it may destroy the whole mechanism. Later, the doctrine of

instrumentality itself was felt to be not in the large interest of the State, and quite recently the swing of the pendulum is the other way. The other day one of the most enlightened of Supreme Court Judges held in what is known as the

Spring of the State of New York, in regard to certain springs which were worked by the State of New York-for this part of business they held that there is no immunity of the State from tax. They said ''You have to draw some line

between one kind of activity of a State and another kind of activity. Of course it cannot be a rigid definition. What may be in one sphere may easily pass into another sphere with the progress of the State and with the development of the

polity in the particular State". (In all probability, this is a reference to the opinion of Frankfurter, J. in New York v. United States (supra) which upheld the application of a Federal Excise Tax to the sale of mineral waters bottled by the

State of New York with a view to providing funds for a State health resort).... (N)ormally speaking, you cannot regard at the present day under existing conditions the carrying on the trade and business as a normal or ordinary function of

the Government. It may develop into ordinary function-certain aspects of it, especially the transport service and certain key industries, may soon become the parts of the State enterprise. The Parliament will take note of the progressive

tendency of the particular times and may at once declare accordingly. It might not have been the ordinary function of Government before. Now it may become an ordinary function. There will be sufficient elasticity in Clause (3) to enable

the Government to exempt from taxation particular trades or industries with are started as public utility services or declare them as regular State industries. Nobody can question a law made by Parliament because the Parliament has

stated that a particular industry is an ordinary function of the State whereas according to the notions of an individual economist A or B it is not a ordinary function of a Government. Parliament will lay down the law of the land and it will be

the sole arbiter of the question as to whether it is an ordinary function of Government or not.

Therefore having regard:

(a) to the plenary power of Parliament to exempt any particular industries, and particular business from the operation of the tax provision.

(b) having regard to the fact that it is not obligatory on Parliament to levy any tax.

(c) that the very conception of State industry may change with the further evolution of the State and changing times, and

(d) to the inter-connection between one State and another.

it will be very difficult to differentiate between particular States, between States which have been working certain industries and other State.... (T)o lay down a general principal of law that even at the present day before the provinces are

on their feet every trade or business is exempt from taxation will lead to wild-goose schemes being started by various provinces. They may not take into account the general interests of the trade and industry in the whole country. They

may not have regard to the difference between one kind of industry and another. Under those circumstances the particular provision which has been inserted by Dr. Ambedkar is a very salutary one and is consistent with the most

advanced principles of democratic and federal policy in all the countries.

(Comments and Emphasis supplied)

172. It is, therefore, clear that Clause (2) of Article 289 was well considered compromise which was arrived at after balancing the demands of those who sought complete exemption of commercial activities of State Governments from

Union Taxation and those who were in favour of levying such Union Taxes. The framers desired that the issue whether the trading and business activities of State Governments should be subject to Union Taxation, be left to the wisdom of

Parliament. As is evident from the reference to New York v. United States (supra) in the extracted portion, the framers were conscious of the difficulty in drawing a line between the governmental and commercial functions of State

Governments and they hoped that Parliament would take into account a host of relevant factors before enacting a law which would specify the trading activities of State Government making them liable to Union Taxation. It is important to

note that the framers did not expressly confer upon the Union the power to tax commercial activities of State Governments. The exercise of such a power is made conditional upon the enactment of a special, duly considered, legislation. It

is also important to note that Clause (2) of Article 289 has made a departure from the proviso to Section 155(1). Under the present scheme, the power to tax is not automatic and the responsibility of specifying the trading and business

activities of State Governments which would be liable to Union Taxation is expressly vested in Parliament.

173. Neither the Act, which is a 1911 enactment, nor the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, can qualify as laws under Article 289. They do not specify which of the trading activities of State Governments are liable to taxation; indeed, by

their very nature, they cannot purport to do so. It must be remembered that the Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act are not Parliamentary Laws in the sense envisaged by Article 289(2). Though the Act is sought to be construed

as a post-Constitutional, Parliamentary enactment, the fact remains that it is a pre-Constitutional, colonial legislation. As for the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, it is, in essence, an ordinary Municipal legislation. What makes it special is

the fact, occasioned in its case by geographical and historical factors, that it was enacted by Parliament instead of by a State legislature. In this regard, we may recall the submissions of the learned Attorney General in respect of how

Parliament discharges its obligation towards enacting laws for Union Territories. After stating that Parliament cannot afford to undertake threadbare discussions before legislating for Union Territories, the learned Attorney General referred

us to the following of the decision of this Court in 292240

(Union Territories) are territories situated in the midst of contiguous territories which have a proper legislature. They are small territories falling under the legislative jurisdiction of Parliament which has hardly sufficient time to look after the

details of all their legislative needs and requirements. To require or expect Parliament to legislate for them will entail a disproportionate pressure on its legislative schedule. It will also mean the unnecessary utilisation of the time of a large

number of members of Parliament for, except the few (less than ten) members returned to Parliament from the Union territory, none else is likely to be interested in such legislation. In such a situation, the most convenient course of

legislating for them is the adaptation, by extension, of laws in force in other areas of the country. As Fazal Ail, J. pointed out in the Delhi Laws Act case, it is not a power to make laws that is delegated but only a power to "transplant"

laws already in force after having undergone scrutiny by Parliament or one of the State legislaturer, and that too, without any material change.

174. It is, therefore, clear that it would be quite dangerous to assume that when Parliament enacted the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, it had intended that the enactment should secure the purpose enshrined in Article 289(2). If any

safe assumption is to be drawn, it is this : in all probability, while enacting the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, Parliament must have "transplanted" a municipal legislation existing in a certain State, made the necessary changes and

completed the procedural formalities. That would explain why the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (as also the New Delhi Municipal Committee Act) contains an exemption on the lines of the one prescribed by Article 285 this is a

typical feature of ordinary municipal legislations, which are enacted by State legislatures who are conscious of the mandate of Article 285. Moreover, such legislations do not contain exemptions in favour of properties of State

Governments because, within the territory of a State, the properties of other State Governments are liable to taxation. So, when such a legislation is "transplanted" almost verbatim into a Union Territory, it will obviously not contain an

exemption in favour of properties of State Governments. In the face of the actual conditions which govern the enactment of laws for Union Territories by Parliament, (these conditions have been statutorily provided; moreover this Court

has already taken notice of them) it is difficult to assume that the omission of an exemption in the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act in favour of State Governments, is deliberate. The Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act cannot,

therefore, be said to meet the special requirements which have been expressed by the framers to be necessary for complying with the spirit of Article 289(2).

175. Reddy, J. has taken the view that the Doctrine of Presumption of Constitutionality of Legislations requires the saving of the taxes which these Acts impose upon the commercial activities of State Governments. The Act is a pre-

Constitutional enactment. The basis of this doctrine is the assumed intention of the legislators not to transgress Constitutional boundaries. It is difficult to appreciate how that intention can be assumed when, at the time that the law was

passed, there was no such barrier and the limitation was brought in by a Constitution long after the enactment of the law. (This Court has in a Constitution Bench decision, 275901 , raised doubts along similar lines). The framers obviously

wanted the law under Article 289(2) to be of a very high standard. Can these laws, which are silent on the most important aspect required by Article 289(2), i.e., the specification of the trading activities of State Governments which would

be liable to Union taxation, be said to meet with that standard?

176. The Doctrine of Presumption of Constitutionality of Legislations is not one of infinite application; it has recognised limitations. It is settled law that if any interpretation is possible which will save an Act from the attack of

unconstitutionality, that interpretation should always be accepted in preference to an alternative interpretation that might also be possible, under which the statute would be void. However, this Court has consistently followed a policy of

not putting an unnatural and forced meaning on the words that have used by the legislature in the search of an interpretation which would save the statutory provisions. We are not ""free to stretch or pervert the language of the enactment in

the interests of any legal or Constitutional theory"" See In Re the Central Provinces & Berar Act No. XIV of 1938, (1939) FCR 18 at p. 37; also see : 275188

177. The Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act are ordinary Municipal Legislations. They do not, and cannot, purport to be laws made by Parliament under Article 289(2). These is no reason why such a strained reasoning should

be employed to save some of the taxes that may be capable of being imposed on certain properties of State Government. There seems to be no pressing reason for invoking the doctrine. Reddy, J. has, in the earlier part of his opinion,

held that a large number of properties of State Governments would be exempt form taxes leviable under these Acts due to the operation of Article 289(1). To employ such reasoning to construe Article 289(2) in a bid to save what would

only be a reduced amount, does not seem justified.

178. The practical effect of the directions recommended by Reddy, J. is also worth noticing. It is abundantly clear that the task of determining which of the activities of Governments are governmental and which are commercial, is an

extremely difficult one. Reddy, J. entrusts this assignment to the ""assessing authorities under the Acts"" who can only be municipal authorities. This is an issue which has confounded court in the U.S. and in Australia for several years. This

issue was considered to be so troublesome by the framers that they entrusted it to Parliament in the hope that it would fully deliberate the matter before enacting a comprehensive legislation.

179. In the In Re : The Delhi Laws Act case, AIR (1951) SC 324, this Court authoritatively held that the legislature cannot delegate its essential policy-making function. Over the years, this Court has elaborated this proposition to hold

that the legislature can delegate some of its legislative functions provided it lays down the policy in clear terms. The legislature is required to declare the policy of law in unambiguous terms, lay down elaborate legal principles and provide

illuminating standards for the guidance of the delegate. Even though this Court has, on occasions, sanctioned very broad delegations of taxing power to municipal bodies, to delegate the task of carving out the distinction between

governmental and business functions of State Governments to municipal authorities would clearly be against the interdiction in the Delhi Laws Act case as the assignment requires not only the making of policy, but indeed, the making of

very difficult and challenging policy choices. Reddy, J. has noted that the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act provides exemptions in favour of activities that are capable of being classified as "charitable purpose", "public worship" etc. and

states that to ascertain the ambit of these categories is an equally difficult task which is already being discharged by the assessing authorities. However, the point that needs to be emphasised, is that Section 115 of the Delhi Municipal

Corporation Act defines these terms and provides guidelines in respect thereof. However, there is no provision in the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act which states that the trading and business operations of State Governments would be

subject to property taxes. The act is equally silent on this aspect. Consequently, no guidelines in this behalf are to be found within the parameters of these legislations. Under these circumstances, in the complete absence of any statutory

policy or any guidelines for the delegation of such a policy, we believe that it would be impermissible and hazardous to directly assign such a function, and power, to Executive Municipal authorities.

180. The decision whether the properties of State Governments occupied for commercial purposes should be subject to the levy of Union taxes is one that is required by Article 289(2) to be made by a legislation which specifies the

activities which would be liable to tax. This decision cannot be entrusted to municipal functionaries. For these reasons, we find ourselves unable to agree with Reddy, J. in his finding that the properties of State Governments occupied by

them for trade or business purposes are subject to the levy of taxes under the Act and the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act.

181. We may now summarise our conclusions:

(i) The central issue in the present matter, namely, whether the properties owned by the States which are situated within Union Territories are exempt from paying property taxes, was specifically answered in the affirmative in the Sea

Customs case; the observations in this regard are part of the ratio decidendi of the case and having been re-affirmed by a Constitution Bench which was hearing a litigation inter parts in the APSRTC case, they constitute good law;

(ii) The definition of ''State'' provided in Section 3(58) of the General Clauses Act, which declares that the word ''State'' would include ''Union Territory'', is inapplicable to Article 246(4);

(iii) The term ""Union Taxation"" used in Article 289(1) will ordinarily mean ""all taxes leviable by the Union"" and it includes within its ambit taxes on property levied within Union Territories; therefore, the States can avail of the exemption

provided in Article 289(1) in respect of their properties situated within Union Territories;

(iv) Property taxes levied by municipalities within Union Territories are properly within the ambit of the exemption provided in Article 289(1) and the State can avail of the exemption.

182. In the result, the Civil Appeals and the Special Leave Petitions are dismissed. There shall be no order as to costs.