

VEDHIK
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ANALYSIS

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FOREWORD

We, at Team Vedhik is happy to introduce a new initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" compilations to help you with UPSC Civil Services Examination preparation. We believe this initiative - "Daily Current Affairs_The Hindu" would help students, especially beginners save time and streamline their preparations with regard to Current Affairs. A content page and an Appendix has been added segregating and mapping the content to the syllabus.

It is an appreciable efforts by Vedhik IAS Academy helping aspirants of UPSC Civil Services Examinations. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Babu Sebastian, former VC - MG University in extending all support to this endeavour. Finally I also extend my thanks to thank Ms. Shilpa Sasidharan and Mr. Shahul Hameed for their assistance in the preparing the compilations.

We welcome your valuable comments so that further improvement may be made in the forthcoming material. We look forward to feedback, comments and suggestions on how to improve and add value for students. Every care has been taken to avoid typing errors and if any reader comes across any such error, the authors shall feel obliged if they are informed at their Email ID.

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China to 'modernise' nuclear arsenal

Beijing defends its atomic weapons policy, urges U.S., Russia to reduce stockpiles

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
BEIJING

China said on Tuesday it will continue to "modernise" its nuclear arsenal and called upon the U.S. and Russia to reduce their own stockpiles a day after global powers pledged to prevent such weapons from spreading.

In a rare joint statement setting aside rising West-East tensions, the U.S., China, Russia, Britain and France reaffirmed their goal of creating a world free of atomic weapons and avoiding a nuclear conflict.

The five nuclear powers

also committed to full future disarmament from atomic weapons, which have only been used in conflict in the U.S. bombings of Japan at the end of the Second World War.

But squaring that rhetoric with reality will not be easy at a time of spiralling tensions between those same global powers not seen since the Cold War.

There are growing global concerns about China's rapid military modernisation, especially after its armed forces last year announced they had developed a hyper-

sonic missile that can fly at five times the speed of sound.

The U.S. has also said China is expanding its nuclear arsenal with as many as 700 warheads by 2027 and possibly 1,000 by 2030.

On Tuesday, China defended its nuclear weapons policy and said Russia and the U.S. – by far the world's largest nuclear powers – should make the first move on disarmament.

"The U.S. and Russia still possess 90% of the nuclear warheads on Earth," Fu Cong, Director General of

the department of arms control at the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said. "They must reduce their nuclear arsenal in an irreversible and legally binding manner."

Mr. Fu dismissed U.S. claims that China was vastly increasing its nuclear capabilities. "China has always adopted the no first use policy and we maintain our nuclear capabilities at the minimal level required for our national security," he said. But he said Beijing would "continue to modernise its nuclear arsenal for reliability and safety issues".

Sri Lanka Cabinet clears oil tank deal

Agreement will mark a milestone for India in a long-stalled, controversial project in Trincomalee

MEERA SRINIVASAN
COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Cabinet has given its nod for a new deal announced by the Energy Minister last week to jointly develop the Trincomalee oil tank farm with India.

According to a press statement issued by the Department on Government Information on decisions taken at the first Cabinet meeting of the year held on Monday, India and Sri Lanka "have reached an agreement to implement a joint development project" through diplomatic talks.

"Accordingly, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal presented by Minister of Power to allocate 24 oil tanks for the business activities of the Ceylon Petroleum



The oil tank farm at Trincomalee in Sri Lanka. • FILE PHOTO

Corporation, to allocate 14 tanks of the Lower Oil Tank Complex already in use by Lanka IOC [Indian Oil Corporation] for the company's business activities and to imple-

ment a development project by a company named Trinco Petroleum Terminal Pvt. Ltd. of the remaining 61 tanks, 51% to be owned by Ceylon Petroleum Corpora-

tion and 49% by Lanka IOC," the statement said, reaffirming Minister Udaya Gammanpila's announcement last week.

The statement did not mention the 50-year lease for the 14 tanks run by Lanka IOC that the Minister earlier spoke of. According to local media reports, the agreement on the project is expected to be signed soon.

Natural harbour

The signing of the agreement will mark a milestone for New Delhi in a long-stalled, controversial project in Sri Lanka's eastern Trincomalee district, which has an enviable natural harbour.

While Indian involvement in a strategic national asset is viewed with suspicion by Sri

Lanka's Sinhala nationalist forces, New Delhi has been keen on partnering Sri Lanka in developing storage tanks of the Second World War era, since it was first discussed around the time of the India-Sri Lanka Accord of 1987.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to the island nation in 2015, spoke of developing Trincomalee as a "regional hub".

The Cabinet also cleared two other proposals with Indian involvement.

Ashok Leyland has won the bid for providing 500 new buses to Sri Lanka, while the Sri Lanka Police force will procure 750 jeeps from Mahindra and Mahindra, according to the official release.

Xi signs combat training order for PLA

‘The armed forces must redouble their efforts to better combine training with combat operations’

ANANTH KRISHNAN
HONG KONG

China’s President Xi Jinping on Tuesday signed an annual mobilisation order to mark the start of this year’s training for the Chinese military, with an emphasis on “combining training with combat operations”.

The training mobilisation orders are issued by Mr. Xi, who also heads the Central Military Commission (CMC), usually in January and the mobilisation orders have in the past impacted how the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) carries out its exercises that often begin in the subsequent weeks following the order.

The official Xinhua news agency said Mr. Xi signed this year’s order on Tuesday and “declared the start of military training for the year.”

“The entire rank and file of the armed forces are required to resolutely implement the plans and instructions of the Party leadership



Routine drill: A file photo of PLA soldiers taking part in combat training in Jiuquan. •REUTERS

and the CMC, according to the order, adding that the changing landscape of national security and combat circumstances must be accurately understood,” the report said.

Evolution of technology

“The armed forces must closely follow the evolution of technology, warfare and rivals, redouble their efforts

to better combine training with combat operations, and strengthen systematic training and the use of technologies to develop an elite force that is capable of fighting and winning wars,” the order said, adding that “all officers and soldiers should uphold the spirit of fearing neither death nor hardship, and conduct training in a vigorous, well-designed and safe man-

ner to boost their commanding and fighting capability and foster excellent conduct.”

The order in 2021 had similarly emphasised “enhancing training in real combat conditions”. Mr. Xi had also issued an order on training in combat conditions in January 2020. Four months later, the PLA deployed two divisions right up to the Line

of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh after the completion of routine exercises, sparking the worst crisis along the India-China border in decades.

Twenty months on, disengagement is yet to happen at several locations along the LAC after multiple rounds of diplomatic and military talks, while tens of thousands of troops remain deployed in forward areas. The PLA has also continued to build infrastructure in forward areas to sustain its deployments through the winter, while India has matched the PLA’s build-up with its own deployments.

The training mobilisation order in January 2020 had called for strengthening military training in combat conditions and it was seen by observers as altering the pattern of annual exercises and forward deployments not only closer to the LAC but also in other theatres, leading to tensions in the South China Sea as well.

The bottom line in Blinken's foray into Southeast Asia

The aim was to drive home the message that America's Indo-Pacific policy is not just aimed at deterring China's rise



HARSH V. PANT & PREMESHA SAHA

The visit by United States Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken to Southeast Asia in December 2021 – his first since becoming Secretary – underscores the importance that is being accorded to this region by the Joe Biden administration. While Mr. Blinken visited Indonesia and Malaysia, he could not go to Thailand after a COVID-19 case was detected in the press corps accompanying him (He landed there, spoke to the Thailand Deputy Prime Minister expressing regret, and then left for the U.S.). In his speech at Universitas Indonesia on December 14, Mr. Blinken laid out the five core principles shaping the American strategy of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Alongside, he also underlined the mechanisms that the U.S. is adopting to implement these core principles.

On being a reliable partner

From Washington's perspective, the aim of laying out the initiatives pertaining to the region was to drive home the message that America's Indo-Pacific policy is not just aimed at deterring Chinese aggressiveness and rise. The idea was to present the U.S. as a reliable partner in meeting the challenges that the Indo-Pacific region

is facing. For instance, completely aware that the Southeast Asian nations are averse to choosing or taking sides in this U.S.-China competition, Mr. Blinken made it a point to mention that "individual countries will be able to choose their own path and their own partners. He said: "It's not about a contest between a U.S.-centric region or a China-centric region as the Indo-Pacific is its own region."

China's shadow

But the impending Chinese threat was always lurking in the background, reflected in the suggestion that "there is so much concern, from northeast Asia to southeast Asia, and from the Mekong River to the Pacific Islands, ... about Beijing's aggressive actions, claiming open seas as their own, distorting open markets through subsidies to its state-run companies, denying the exports or revoking deals for countries whose policies it does not agree with, engaging in illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities".

The competition between the U.S. and China in the Indo-Pacific is in full swing, and this competition is here to stay. Given how both China and the U.S. are trying to lure the Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries to their side – China with its grand economic infrastructure investment deals and the U.S. through recent high profile official visits as well as the promise of investing more in this region under the Build Back Better World initiative and Blue Dot Network – there is



evidence that Southeast Asia is the major theatre where this competition will play out.

In Southeast Asia, the U.S.-China competition is most visible in two areas; one is the South China Sea and the second is the investment in fulfilling the infrastructure development needs of Southeast Asian countries. The U.S. has continued its Freedom of Navigation operations in the disputed waters of the South China Sea; these operations are meant to challenge "unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea [that] pose a serious threat to the freedoms of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight".

In his remarks in Indonesia, Mr. Blinken stressed America's determination "to ensure freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, where Beijing's aggressive actions there threaten the movement of more than \$3 trillion worth of commerce every year". He also brought up the 2016 international tribunal ruling which had rejected the Chinese nine-dash-line claims and asserted that the U.S. and the other South China Sea claimant countries will "continue to push

back on such behaviour".

Beijing is invested here

When it comes to investments in infrastructure development, Southeast Asia has been one of the top recipients of Chinese investments under its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). How these investments have driven countries such as Cambodia and Laos to do China's bidding in the ASEAN even at the cost of compromising ASEAN's unity is a known fact. Besides this, China has been heavily investing in port and railway connectivity in countries such as Indonesia and Vietnam.

Mr. Blinken reiterated that the U.S. remains committed to help close the gap on infrastructure. Recognising that "ports, roads, power grids, broadband – all are building blocks for global trade, for commerce, for connectivity, for opportunity, for prosperity. And they're essential to the Indo-Pacific's inclusive growth," he pointed out that the members of the Quad (Australia, India, Japan and the U.S.) have provided more than \$48 billion in government-backed financing for infrastructure for the region. The infrastructure coordination group launched by the Quad members is seeking to catalyse even more investment and is looking to partner with Southeast Asia on infrastructure and many other shared priorities. Washington is promising to do more under the Build Back Better World initiative and the Blue Dot Network. The U.S. is trying to showcase a comprehensive eco-

nommic framework in the Indo-Pacific focusing on "trade and the digital economy, technology, resilient supply chains, decarbonisation and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest".

Alternative models are key

The alignment between the U.S.'s vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific was underlined. The ASEAN countries, even after the release of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific, do not have a uniform approach when it comes to dealing with the U.S. and China. These differing approaches are also challenging the much vaunted ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific. Though external players will have a limited role in ensuring that the unity within ASEAN is restored, providing proper alternative models of investments for development in sectors such as infrastructure, digital economy, supply chain, and health for the Southeast Asian nations will be critical. The economic framework, investment plans and promises outlined by Mr. Blinken need to be made operational quickly if Washington is to show that it is indeed serious about sustained commitment toward the Indo-Pacific.

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Supreme Court to hear EWS quota case today

Centre cites urgency, says NEET-PG counselling in limbo

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

A three-judge Special Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, is scheduled to hear on Wednesday a case raising questions on the ₹8 lakh annual income limit criterion fixed to identify the economically weaker sections (EWS) of society for extending reservation benefits.

The development came hours after Chief Justice of India (CJI) N.V. Ramana on Tuesday agreed to adjust the various combinations of the court's Benches, fixed for the week, to accommodate the case.

The other two judges on the Special Bench are Justices Surya Kant and A.S. Bopanna.

Urgent listing

The Union government, represented by Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, has been making back-to-back oral mentionings before the court, on January 3 and 4, to hear the case quickly. January 3 – the very day the court reopened after Christmas holidays – saw Mr. Mehta plead with Justice Chandrachud, who has been hearing the EWS case, for an urgent listing.

On Tuesday, again, Mr.

Pressing issue

A timeline of the EWS reservation case

July 29, 2021: Government issues notification announcing 27% quota for Other Backward Classes and 10% for Economically Weaker Sections in the All-India Quota (AIQ) category in NEET-PG admissions

Aug. 28: A batch of petitions, filed through advocate Charu Mathur, challenges the notification in the Supreme Court

Sept. 6: Court issues notice to the government

Oct. 21: SC extends the ambit of the case, asks govt. to file an affidavit clarifying the basis for adopting the ₹8 lakh income criterion to identify EWS category

Nov. 25: Govt. informs SC it has taken a considered decision to revisit the criteria for determining the EWS. Forms a review committee. Agrees to suspend NEET counselling

Dec. 31: The review committee submits reports, finds ₹8 lakh criterion "feasible"



Mehta came up before the CJI's Bench to press for a hearing on January 5 itself.

Mr. Mehta underscored that the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for post-graduate courses (NEET-PG) counselling was suspended since late November because of the questions raised about the criterion in the EWS quota. Medical admissions were getting delayed, and the issue had to be resolved quickly.

Resident doctors in Delhi had recently organised a massive protest over the de-

lay in the counselling schedule, leading to violence.

'Future prospects'

Mr. Mehta submitted to the court that the doctors were rightly agitated about their future prospects. He urged the CJI to list the case on January 5.

During the interaction, Chief Justice Ramana said the court's Benches had already been fixed for the entire opening week of miscellaneous hearings.

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Supreme Court to hear EWS quota case today

The EWS case was heard by a Bench of three judges led by Justice Chandrachud, while the Benches were sitting in a combination of two judges for the week.

But Mr. Mehta persisted that even a two-judge Bench led by Justice Chandrachud would be enough to hear the case as long as it was scheduled on Wednesday.

The CJI agreed in court to see whether the schedule could be juggled to form a three-judge Special Bench.

NEET counselling was suspended after the Union government, on November 25, informed the court about its “considered decision” to revisit the “criteria” determining EWS. The government had asked for four weeks to form a review committee, examine the issue and file a report.

The government’s submission followed rounds of grilling from the court in past hearings to reveal the logic and study before zeroing in on the “exact figure” of ₹8 lakh as the annual income limit to identify EWS of society.

The Centre’s review committee submitted a report on December 31, supporting the ₹8 lakh income threshold as a “reasonable” basis to determine EWS.

The court’s query was significant as the One Hundred and Third Constitutional Amendment of 2019, which introduced the 10% EWS quota, is itself under challenge before a larger Bench.

The Amendment is under question for making economic criterion as the sole ground for grant of reservation benefits.

Inadequate response

The ₹8 lakh income criteria to identify EWS are not reasonably explained by the Government

The submission by a Government-appointed committee to the Supreme Court that the annual family income of ₹8 lakh is “a reasonable” threshold to determine if someone belongs to economically weaker sections to avail 10% reservations in admissions and jobs does not seem to hold water. The submission rejected the notion that the Government had “mechanically” adopted ₹8 lakh as the cut-off because it was used to identify the OBC creamy layer, by asserting that the income criterion was “more stringent” than the one for the OBC creamy layer. This justification, based on a few more criteria that exclude some income and occupational parameters from the OBC creamy layer, however, is not convincing as the Court’s key question remained unanswered satisfactorily. The Court had said that the OBC category is socially and educationally backward, and had therefore additional impediments to overcome, and had asked whether it “would... be arbitrary to provide the same income limit both for the OBC and EWS categories”. The submission does not adequately respond to this question. On whether at all differences in purchasing power across urban/rural regions and per capita income/GDP across States were considered to arrive at this number, the submission suggests that this exercise would be infeasible and complex. But while asserting that an annual family income criterion of ₹8 lakh is the right approach, the committee does not present any data on the estimated number of EWS persons in the population based on this.

If available consumer expenditure surveys such as the 2011-12 NSSO report, Key Indicators of Household Consumer Expenditure are any indication, a bulk of the population will be eligible for reservations under the “below ₹8 lakh” cut-off under the EWS category, rendering the limit irrational. The committee’s assertion that ₹8 lakh corresponds to the “effective income tax exemption limit” even as the only income slab exempt from paying taxes was for those earning below ₹2.5 lakh, also renders the criteria on “being economically weak” as less stringent. The submission lays emphasis on the fact that outcomes in the recent entrance and recruitment examinations (NEET, UPSC, JEE) showed an even bunching of eligible candidates in different income brackets (0-₹2.5 lakh, ₹2.5-₹5 lakh, ₹5-₹8 lakh), but it does not explain why marks cut-offs were even lower in recruitment exams than that of the socially and educationally backward OBCs. The validity of the 103rd Constitution Amendment, through which the EWS quota was introduced in 2019, is in any case still before a Constitution Bench. But the apex court must seek more clarity on the criteria adopted by the Government committee to set the income limit for identifying the EWS sections eligible for reservations.

Availability of cotton, rising prices worry textile industry

Prices have surged up to ₹70,000 a candy: industry bodies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE

High cotton prices this season has become a subject of concern to the domestic textile industry as the units are facing not only spike in raw material prices but also shortage in availability.

T. Rajkumar, chairman of Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, said in a press release that the average price of cotton was ₹37,000 a candy (355 kg) in September 2020 and it rose to ₹60,000 in October 2021, when the new cotton season started. On December 31, the price peaked at ₹70,000. Further, only about 120 lakh



bales arrived in the market between October 1 and December 31 as against the usual arrival of 170 lakh to 200 lakh bales.

The Southern India Mills' Association chairman Ravi Sam said though the 2021-2022 cotton season started with a comfortable opening

stock of 75 lakh bales and estimated crop of 360 lakh bales, the cotton prices started increasing from the beginning. There was a pent-up demand for the cotton in the post-COVID period. The U.S. sanctions on Xinjian cotton, that accounts 10% of the world cotton production, is another factor.

“MCX and NCDEX, dominated by the large traders are also fuelling the market.” At present, Indian cotton prices are higher than the international prices, affecting the competitiveness of the industry. The government should immediately remove the import duty on cotton.

‘India spent record \$55.7 bn on gold imports in 2021’

‘Deferred weddings conducted last year spurred demand’

REUTERS

MUMBAI

India splurged a record \$55.7 billion on gold imports in 2021, buying more than double the previous year’s tonnage as a price drop favoured retail buyers and pent-up demand emerged for weddings that were delayed when the pandemic first hit.

Details of the world’s second-biggest consuming nation’s soaring imports were disclosed to Reuters by a senior government official who requested anonymity. The 2021 gold import bill easily doubled the \$22 billion spent in 2020, and surpassed the previous high, set in 2011, of \$53.9



billion, according to the official, who tracks broad import trends. In volume, India imported 1,050 tonnes in 2021, the most in a decade, and far more than the 430 tonnes imported in 2020, the official said.

“Last year, demand was robust as lots of weddings were postponed to 2021 from 2020 because of the

coronavirus outbreak,” said Harshad Ajmera, a gold wholesaler in Kolkata.

Mr. Ajmera noted a price correction had made gold more affordable for retail consumers in India early last year. Local gold prices hit a record of ₹56,191 per 10 gm in August 2020, but fell back to ₹43,320 in March 2021, when monthly imports spiked to a record 177 tonnes.

Imports could moderate in January as rising coronavirus cases have prompted local authorities to impose curbs, said a Mumbai-based bullion dealer. “Jewellers are afraid of lockdown. They have scaled down purchases,” the dealer said.

Three-judge Bench to hear CJAR petition on 2017 fine

Plea seeks ₹25 lakh to be treated as donation to lawyers' body

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday referred to a three-judge Bench a plea made by Campaign for Judicial Accountability and Reforms (CJAR) to consider ₹25 lakh paid by it on the basis of a 2017 court order to be treated as a donation.

In December 2017, a three-judge Bench of Justices R.K. Agrawal and Arun Mishra (both retired now) and A.M. Khanwilkar imposed a cost of ₹25 lakh on CJAR to be paid to the Supreme Court Bar Association.

CJAR's PIL

The reason for imposing the hefty cost was a PIL petition filed by CJAR, represented by advocate Prashant Bhushan, demanding a Special Investigation Team into a conspiracy allegedly hatched by several persons, including a retired High Court judge, to bribe Supreme Court judges for a favourable order in a private medical college case.

The plea by CJAR to treat



the payment as a donation to the Supreme Court Bar Association came up for hearing before a two-judge Bench of Justices Khanwilkar and C.T. Ravikumar on Tuesday. This Bench said that since the earlier order was passed by a three-judge Bench, any modification in the intent of the 2017 order could only be considered by a Bench having the same number of judges. Attorney General K.K. Venugopal agreed with the court's stand and indicated that the money was welcome to provide welfare and relief for many lawyers.

Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for the organisation, said CJAR has

several respected senior lawyers and judges onboard, and considering their long services to the legal profession, the money should be treated as a donation rather than as a punishment.

Mr. Bhushan said the money should be released to the lawyers' association so that it could be put to good use as soon as possible.

Identical petition

The petition of the CJAR was identical to a petition filed by advocate Kamini Jaiswal on the same issue.

In 2017, the court had termed both the Jaiswal and CJAR petitions as efforts to "seriously jeopardise the independence of the judiciary".

The Justice Agarwal Bench had, four years ago, dismissed the Jaiswal petition by expressing hope that "good sense prevail over the legal fraternity and amends be made as lot of uncalled for damage has been made to the great Institution in which public reposes their faith".

The hint of a 'one nation one NGO' regime

The current purge against civil society organisations seems to be indiscriminate and alarming



M.S. SRIRAM

On December 31, 2021, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued another public notice extending the validity of registration certificates that were expiring from September 29, 2020 to March 31, 2022 till the latter date, provided that the request for renewal had not been rejected. What should have been a routine activity of the Ministry has turned out to be a fairly detailed exercise of scrutiny, resulting in a paralysis in granting permissions. The levels of due diligence and the information sought on the one hand and the annual declarations to be given by the board members of civil society organisations on the other have increased significantly. The mandatory opening of bank accounts for foreign contributions has been centralised in one branch of the State Bank of India. The linking of Permanent Account Number (PAN), Aadhaar number and mapping it with the bank account/s of the individual board members are happening with gusto. All this has resulted in a chill settling over the people who are and have been associated with civil society organisations serving a social or cultural cause. The registrations under Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) have been long necessitated in order to undertake due diligence of the causes for which the organisation is working for and also to have a handle on the traceability of funds.

Data on cancellations

Recently, the Missionaries of Charity established by Nobel Laureate Mother Teresa, was in the news for

the cancellation of its permission under the FCRA. A perusal of the statistics available on the website of the Ministry of Home Affairs (<https://bit.ly/32Kij6E>) reveals an interesting pattern. Of the 20,675 permissions under the FCRA that were cancelled from 2011 onwards, only 89 have been cancelled on request; the rest have been cancelled on violation. Of these 20,675 cancellations, 80% of the cancellations are after 2014, with a massive purge of around 10,003 permissions in the year 2015. The dashboard (<https://bit.ly/3sXf0su>) shows a little under 17,000 active organisations – which have either got permission or will know their fate by March 2022, while around 33,000 organisations have either lost their permission or it has expired. These cancellation numbers do not include the rejection of around 600 applications that have been in the news in the recent past, as the website shows only three cancellations in the year 2021 and none in 2020.

There has been a pattern to the organised attack on civil society organisations and this looks like the final shot. In the past, the amendments in the FCRA that restricted the ability to sub-grant, killed many of the niche organisations working in very remote areas which had no direct access to international funding but were doing it through larger non-governmental organisations. The other amendment restricting the proportion of expenses on administration almost choked organisations that worked for the rights of the disposed. The increasing level of surveillance type of data sought has resulted in many organisations losing people on their governance structure and resulting in problems in funding.

The level of the purge is alarming on two fronts. If this purge is because of violations that seem to



threaten sovereignty because of evidence of money laundering, subversive activities and violation of the laws, then it is worrying that these organisations survived for all these years. This says a bit about the system of scrutiny that we have had in the past.

Alternately, if these are organisations that have been purged on xenophobic considerations – because they are activists usually questioning the Government and speaking for the marginalised – organisations working on issues such as human rights, and organisations serving the people whom the state is unable to reach, then it is even more alarming. That is because it is suppressing the concept of *antyo daya* – reaching the last person with rights, services and entitlements.

Organisations that are needed

Why we need civil society organisations is a moot question. We need them because they usually work on what can be called an unreasonable agenda. This unreasonableness falls in three large verticals. The first is that they ask for greater efficiency, delivery and accountability from the state. Whether is it about rehabilitation and compensation in the case of land acquisition or setting up a great accountability framework as was done through the movement led by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti

Sangathan for the Right to Information. The second vertical is in correcting the extractive nature of markets. The groups asking for environmental accountability are looking at inter-generational justice on a matter that is not very precisely measurable but is palpable. The third is basically picking up causes that are so niche that it is beyond the capability of the state to come up with such initiatives such as a school of drama set up by NINASAM (Nilakanteshwara Natyaseva Samgha) in a village called Heggodu, Karnataka, or an idea of distributing clothing for work as done by Goonj. These initiatives cannot be put into specific business plans, spreadsheets or government schemes. They, therefore, need a grant-based, cause-based revenue stream model.

Issue of funding

Why foreign funding? As we know, “causes” have no boundaries and funding for such socially desirable belief systems could come from beyond borders. Some causes carried out by organisations such as Doctors Without Borders, or Reporters Without Borders are by definition international in nature. Similar is the case with the Jaipur foot provided by the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti. The humanitarian work by the Missionaries of Charity is beyond the capability of a state. Such causes do not have a rational basis to be explained in terms of a financial model; how do you put a price tag to press freedom? The niche funding will happen from agencies that may be beyond the borders. They need to be encouraged.

In general, past regimes have been tolerant of all developmental and cultural causes; somewhat wary and tolerant of rights-based causes; and largely suspicious of civil society organisations working for human rights and environmental causes. Both human rights and

environmental causes put these civil society organisations directly in confrontation with the job of policing/internal security and “development” or economic growth. That is a fight that the civil society organisations were used to.

Deeper study needed

However, the current purge seems to be indiscriminate. The depth and the variety of the work of a civil society organisation cannot be captured in the annual returns filed on the FCRA portal, where there is no scope for explaining something beyond the binary. There needs to be a study on how many civil society organisations lost their permissions on “expiry” only because the pre-populated drop-downs given by the FCRA portal were unable to capture the work of the organisations.

The duality of welcoming foreign investments (which takes away capital gains and dividends) while actively discouraging foreign aid to charities is staring us in the face. The definition of what is foreign in the case of electoral bonds and donations to political parties is dodgy at best. This duality is the signature of the current dispensation. Its appetite to collect data is matched only by its reluctance to share data. If the hope, therefore, for civil society organisations is corporate social responsibility funding and funding from Indian philanthropists, watch this space. As cartoonist P. Mahamud indicated in a cartoon, we are moving towards a ‘One Nation One NGO’ regime.

(The writer is on the boards of non-governmental organisations, or NGOs that have applied for FCRA permission. None of those NGOs is mentioned in the article.)

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States told to share intel on common grid

Shah asks DGPs to provide adequate information through counter-terror network

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The Union government has asked the States to share more intelligence inputs through the Multi Agency Centre (MAC), a common counter-terrorism grid under the Intelligence Bureau that was made operational in 2001 following the Kargil War.

At a high-level meet on Monday, Union Home Minister Amit Shah asked the Directors-General of Police to share adequate information and actionable inputs through the MAC.

As many as 28 organisations, including the Research and Analysis Wing



Taking stock: Home Minister Amit Shah reviewing the security situation in the country with officials on Monday. ■PTI

(R&AW), armed forces and State police, are part of the platform. Various security agencies share real-time in-

telligence inputs on the MAC.

Plans are afoot for more than a decade to link the sys-

tem up to the district level.

A senior government official said that though the system existed to share information among various agencies, it was not being implemented effectively.

‘States reluctant’

“States are often reluctant to share information on the platform. There are several gaps in sharing critical information at the right time, the meeting by the Home Minister will give a push to the efforts,” the official stated.

There are around 400 secured sites connected with the MAC headquarters.

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The reluctance on the part of the States was also stated in a parliamentary standing committee report in 2020.

The committee had observed that the contribution made over the years by State agencies is lower in the overall inputs that had been received at the MAC.

The IB had informed the committee that all organisations that are in any way involved in the counter-terrorism effort are members of this centre. All the States have a Subsidiary Multi Agency Centre (SMAC) located in the capitals.

The IB informed the panel that the Union Home Ministry, along with the IB, was contemplating to ex-

tend the connectivity of SMAC to the districts.

“So, the IB is picking up districts in a phased manner because there is an issue of connecting them with the lease line, encryptors, etc. Further, At the MAC level, the meeting of all these agencies is convened almost every day where intelligence of the last 24 hours is brought on to the table, discussed and follow-up action is devised or agreed upon,” the report said.

The IB Director had told the committee that there had been a few instances where some State agencies hesitated to share their intelligence inputs with the MAC.

General Studies Paper I	
A	History of Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of art forms, literature and architecture from ancient to modern times;
B	Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present-significant events, personalities, issues;
C	Freedom struggle-its various stages and important contributors / contributions from different parts of the country;
D	Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country;
E	History of the world will include events from 18 th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, re-drawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization,
F	Political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.-their forms and effect on the society
G	Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India;
H	Effects of globalization on Indian society;
I	Role of women and women's organization;
J	Social empowerment, communalism, regionalism & secularism
K	Salient features of world's physical geography;
L	Geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes;
M	Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.
N	Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian subcontinent);
O	Factors responsible for the location of primary, secondary, and tertiary sector industries in various parts of the world (including India);
P	Population and associated issues;
Q	Urbanization, their problems and their remedies
General Studies Paper II	
A	India and its neighbourhood- relations;
B	Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate;
C	Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests;
D	Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
E	Indian Constitution, historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure;
F	Comparison of the Indian Constitutional scheme with other countries;
G	Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
H	Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these;
I	Structure, organization and functioning of the executive and the judiciary, Ministries and Departments;

J	Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions;
K	Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional bodies;
L	Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies;
M	Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections;
N	Salient features of the Representation of People's Act;
O	Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;
P	Citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures;
Q	Issues relating to poverty and hunger,
R	Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States, Performance of these schemes;
S	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to education and human resources;
T	Issues relating to development and management of social sector / services relating to health
General Studies Paper III	
A	Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment;
B	Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth;
C	Inclusive growth and issues arising from it;
D	Infrastructure Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. Government budgeting;
E	Land reforms in India
F	Major crops, cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems;
G	Storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints;
H	e-technology in the aid of farmers; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.
I	Issues of buffer stocks and food security, Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping;
J	Food processing and related industries in India – scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management;
K	Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices
L	Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology;
M	Indigenization of technology and developing new technology;
N	Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life;
O	Issues relating to intellectual property rights
P	Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment
Q	Disaster and disaster management
R	Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security;
S	Money-laundering and its prevention;

T	Various forces and their mandate;
U	Security challenges and their management in border areas;
V	Linkages of organized crime with terrorism;
W	Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security;
X	Linkages between development and spread of extremism.
General Studies Paper IV	
A	Ethics and Human Interface: Essence, determinants and consequences of Ethics in human actions;
B	Dimensions of ethics;
C	Ethics in private and public relationships. Human Values - lessons from the lives and teachings of great leaders, reformers and administrators;
D	Role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values.
E	Attitude: Content, structure, function; its influence and relation with thought and behaviour;
F	Moral and political attitudes;
G	Social influence and persuasion.
H	Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service , integrity, impartiality and non-partisanship, objectivity, dedication to public service, empathy, tolerance and compassion towards the weaker sections.
I	Emotional intelligence-concepts, and their utilities and application in administration and governance.
J	Contributions of moral thinkers and philosophers from India and world.
K	Public/Civil service values and Ethics in Public administration: Status and problems;
L	Ethical concerns and dilemmas in government and private institutions;
M	Laws, rules, regulations and conscience as
N	sources of ethical guidance;
O	Accountability and ethical governance; strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance; ethical issues in international relations and funding;
P	Corporate governance.
Q	Probity in Governance: Concept of public service;
R	Philosophical basis of governance and probity;
S	Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.
T	Case Studies on above issues.