

FEBRUARY

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प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY



MK Yadav Sir

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India ranks 38 out of 139 countries on World Bank's Logistics Performance Index Report 2023; India's rank has improves by sixteen places from 54 in 2014

Context: India's logistics performance has witnessed a remarkable upsurge, as per the latest findings of the **latest Logistics Performance Index**.

Logistics Performance Index Report (2023):

- **About:** The LPI is an interactive benchmarking tool created to help countries identify the challenges and opportunities they face in their performance on trade logistics and what they can do to improve their performance.
- **Released by:** World Bank.
- **Performance:** India has climbed to the 38th position out of 139 countries from its rank of 44 in 2018 and 54 in 2014, showcasing a positive trend in India's logistics competitiveness on the global stage.
- **LPI is based on following Informations:**
 - A worldwide survey of international logistics operators on the ground (global freight forwarders and express carriers).
 - Granular high frequency information on maritime shipping and container tracking, postal and air freight activities.
- **Components:**
 - Customs Clearance Process
 - Infrastructure Quality
 - Ease of Arranging Shipments
 - Quality of Logistics Services
 - Tracking and Tracing
 - Timeliness
- **Factors Contributing to Improvement:** Launch of significant initiatives such as the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan for multimodal connectivity and the National Logistics Policy, aimed at enhancing efficiency and reducing costs.

Logistics Jump

India jumped six places on the World Bank Logistics Index

Soft and hard infra helps improve performance Technology also a factor Better dwell times than some advanced countries

	Rank	Rank	2018	2023
Singapore	1	LPI Rank	44	▲ 38
Finland	2	Customs	40	▼ 47
Germany	3	Infrastructure	52	▲ 47
Canada	7	International shipments	44	▲ 22
France	13	Logistics quality and competence	42	▲ 38
United States	17	Tracking and tracing	38	▼ 41
China	19	Timeliness	52	▲ 35
United Kingdom	19	2023 rank is grouped rank out of 139 countries, 2018 rank considered 160 countries		
Malaysia	26			
Thailand	34			
India	38			
Saudi Arabia	38			

Source: World Bank, LPI 2023

CDS asks industry to help boost def space

₹25k Cr Earmarked To Meet Needs Over Next Few Yrs'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: All stakeholders in the defence space arena should work on bolstering India's counter-space capabilities, chief of defence staff General Anil Chauhan said on Wednesday, in remarks that come in the backdrop of China rapidly developing and deploying potent anti-satellite (A-Sat) weapons.

Indian armed forces will roughly spend over Rs 25,000 crore in the next few years to meet its defence space requirements, ranging from building a constellation of surveillance satellites to secure communications networks.

"It is the right time for the private industry to utilise this opportunity. I think it is time to build a highly-capable at-manirbhar (self-sufficient) defence space ecosystem," the CDS said, inaugurating the three-day 'DefSat' seminar and exhibition here.



Chief of defence staff General Anil Chauhan (left) at the DefSAT defence conference at Manekshaw Centre in Delhi on Wednesday

The industry should partner the armed forces in augmenting ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) capabilities by developing multi-sensor satellites, launch-on-demand services, and a robust network of ground stations. There is also the need to develop indigenous positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) services by strengthening the NAVIC constellation, he said.

Stakeholders in the defence-space ecosystem also need to focus on counter-space capabilities as a deterrent for

safeguarding the country's space assets from enemy attacks, Gen Chauhan said.

Stressing the "vitality" of space for mankind as well as for the armed forces, CDS said space can be used as a force-multiplier to enhance combat capabilities in the traditional domains of land, air, sea as well as newer ones like cyber-warfare.

During the seminar, Gen Chauhan listed out the major initiatives taken by the government to capitalise on space to strengthen the capabilities of the armed forces.

Context: Recently, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), delivered a compelling address at the Space Seminar and Exhibition held in New Delhi. In his speech, he stressed the critical need for establishing a resilient defence space ecosystem.

About Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

• Background:

- Recommended by Group of Ministers (GoM) in 2001 following the Kargil Review Committee report.
- Naresh Chandra Committee (2012) proposed a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee as a step towards CDS.
- Post of CDS created in 2019 based on recommendations of Lt General DB Shekatkar's committee.

• Roles and Responsibilities:

- To **head the Department of Military Affairs** in Ministry of Defence and function as its Secretary.
- To act as the **Principal Military Advisor** to Hon'ble Raksha Mantri on all Tri-Service matters.
- To function as the **Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee**
- To administer the Tri-Service organizations/agencies/commands.
- To be a member of **Defence Acquisition Council** chaired by Hon'ble Raksha Mantri.
- To function as the **Military Advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority**.
- To bring about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance, etc. of the three Services.

PRITHvi Vigyan (PRITHVI) Scheme

Posted On: 07 FEB 2024 5:33PM by PIB Delhi

Context: In an effort to bolster the understanding of Earth's complex systems and to provide essential services for the nation, the Union Cabinet, on 5th January 2024, approved the comprehensive "PRITHvi Vigyan (PRITHVI)" scheme.

PRITHvi Vigyan (PRITHVI)" scheme:

- **Approval In:** January 2024.
- **Objective:** Holistically addresses all components of the Earth system - **atmosphere, hydrosphere, geosphere, cryosphere, and biosphere.**
- **Purpose:** To improve understanding of Earth System Sciences and provide reliable services for the country.
- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- **Duration:** 2021-2026.
- **Total Cost:** Rs. 4797 crores.
- **Sub-schemes under PRITHVI:**
 - **Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS):** Focused on studying atmospheric dynamics, climate modeling, and enhancing observational systems to better understand weather patterns and climate change.
 - **Ocean Services, Modelling Application, Resources and Technology (O-SMART):** Dedicated to oceanic research.
 - **Polar Science and Cryosphere Research (PACER):** Centered on polar regions and cryosphere.
 - **Seismology and Geosciences (SAGE):** On seismic activity and geosciences, aiming to enhance earthquake monitoring, geological mapping, and disaster preparedness measures.
 - **Research, Education, Training and Outreach (REACHOUT):** To foster research, education, and outreach activities.

Centre vs states row on tax devolution deepens

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: The Karnataka government led by chief minister Siddaramaiah and deputy chief minister DK Shivakumar took to Delhi's streets on Wednesday to protest alleged "financial discrimination" against the state, prompting a furious response from the Union government that accused the Congress of fuelling a "separatist mentality" that wanted to "break up the country" based on outrageously "false claims". The protest marks deepening fissures between the BJP-led Union government and states ruled by parties opposed to the BJP, particularly those from southern India, with Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan set to hold a similar protest on Thursday, with support from Tamil Nadu.

Speaking at Jantar Mantar on Wednesday, Siddaramaiah said that it was a "historic protest" that sought to gain the attention of the central government and the people of the country. "We are raising the issue of discrimination meted out by the govern-

continued on →15



Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and dy CM DK Shivakumar at the protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Wednesday. VIPIN KUMAR/HT

Modi slams Cong over North-South false binary

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday accused the Congress of trying to drive a wedge between the northern and southern states and said the opposition party's government in Karnataka was trying to create a narrative that will jeopardise the country's future.

"Today I want to share my

pain on a specific matter... The way language is being spoken these days to break the country, these new narratives are being made for political gains. An entire state is speaking this language; nothing can be worse for the country than this... what language have we started saying," Modi asked in the Upper House. →P10

Context: The Karnataka government organized a protest in Delhi under the banner of "My Tax My Right" to voice opposition against what it deems as financial injustices aimed to highlight grievances regarding the allocation of funds and other financial matters affecting the state.

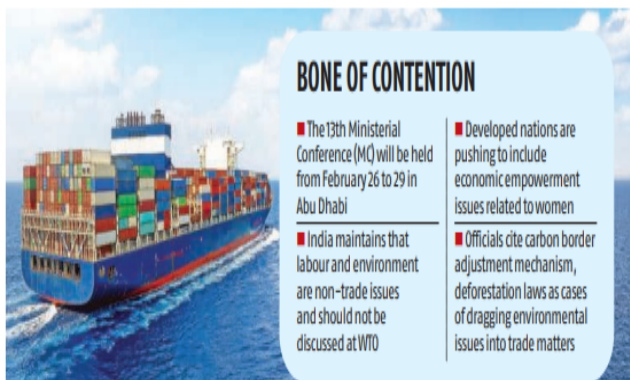
Finance Commission:

- **Article 280:** It stipulates that the President of India shall constitute a **Finance Commission** at intervals of five years or earlier if deemed necessary. The Finance Commission's primary task is to determine the method and formula for the **distribution of tax proceeds among the Centre and the states.**
 - **Composition:** The Finance Commission typically comprises a chairman and four other members **appointed by the President.**
 - **About 15th finance Commission:** N.K. Singh appointed as its chairman. Recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission cover a period of five years, from the fiscal year 2021-22 to 2025-26.
 - **Criteria for Allocation:** Population (15%), Area (15%), Forest and Ecology (10%), Income Distance (45%), Demographic Performance (12.5%) and Tax Effort (2.5%).

Borrowing by States:

- **Borrowing Limit on State:** The Net Borrowing Ceiling (NBC) is a financial restriction imposed by the central government on the borrowing capacity of states in India.
- **Limitation on Borrowings:** The NBC sets a cap on the total amount of borrowing that states can undertake from all sources, including open market borrowings.
- **According to Article 293(3)** of the Constitution, the State has to obtain the consent of the Centre to raise 'any loan', if 'any part of the previous loan' extended by the Centre is outstanding. The imposition of the NBC is done by invoking the powers of the Centre under Article 293(3).
- **Issues:** Southern states like Karnataka is demanding more financial resources and autonomy in financial matters.

India to oppose mandate on non-trade issues



BONE OF CONTENTION

- The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC) will be held from February 26 to 29 in Abu Dhabi
- India maintains that labour and environment are non-trade issues and should not be discussed at WTO
- Developed nations are pushing to include economic empowerment issues related to women
- Officials cite carbon border adjustment mechanism, deforestation laws as cases of dragging environmental issues into trade matters

SHREYA NANDI
New Delhi, 7 February

India will oppose any work programme or a negotiation mandate on non-trade issues such as environment, gender and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) at the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) biennial meeting scheduled for the month-end.

Government officials said India is against any work programme or a roadmap for these issues, as well as linking of MSMEs and gender with trade.

"We are also against any mandate for negotiations (in these areas) in the future," one of the officials said on Wednesday.

The 13th Ministerial Conference (MC) will be held during February 26 to 29 in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE).

India will continue to maintain its stand that labour and environment are

non-trade issues and should not be discussed at the WTO and trade barriers should not be erected under the guise of sustainable development.

There are multilateral forums like the United Nations where these issues can be discussed, another government official said.

"There are specialised bodies where these issues should be discussed. These are not trade issues but have a trade implication," the official said.

Ahead of MC13, developed nations are pushing to begin formal talks on these non-trade issues.

Developed countries also want to include women's economic empowerment issues in the WTO talks. India believes that this is a social and domestic matter and there are specialised conventions of the UN to discuss them.

"So, we will not agree to any work programme. We will agree to discussions to promote sustainable development but

our rights and obligations should not be impacted," the official added.

"The purpose of the trade is to ensure sustainable development. So under the guise of this, developed countries cannot erect protectionist barriers, this is our submission," the official said.

Another official said the European Union's (EU's) carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) and deforestation laws are cases of dragging environmental issues into trade matters.

The issue of the EU rolling out CBAM — which is applicable to all countries — however, cannot be discussed by the ministerial. The matter is being discussed between India and the EU bilaterally. "Such measures may not only violate the rules of the WTO but also have systemic implications for international law as a whole, since unilateral action undermines multilaterally negotiated rights and obligations of countries," the official said.

Context: World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference which is scheduled to take place in February 2024 in has drawn attention due to India's firm stance against linking issues such as environment, gender, and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with trade.

World Trade Organization (WTO):

- **Establishment:** The WTO was established on January 1, 1995, succeeding the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- **Objectives:** Facilitate international trade by promoting free and fair trade practices.
- **Agreements:**
 - The WTO oversees agreements covering goods, services, and intellectual property rights.
 - Key agreements include the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), and Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- **Ministerial Conferences:** Held every two years, Ministerial Conferences are the highest decision-making body of the WTO.
- **Recent MC:** Abu Dhabi, UAE, the 13th Ministerial Conference
- **Position Against Non-Trade Issues Mandate:**
 - India opposes any work program or negotiation mandate on non-trade issues such as environment, gender, and MSMEs at the WTO's upcoming Ministerial Conference.
 - Specifically, India objects to linking MSMEs and gender with trade and opposes any future negotiations mandate in these areas.
- **Stand on Labor and Environment:**
 - India maintains that labor and environment are non-trade issues and should not be discussed within the WTO framework.
 - It argues that erecting trade barriers under the guise of sustainable development is not acceptable.
 - India suggests that non-trade issues be addressed in specialized forums such as the United Nations, rather than at the WTO.

JJB accepts police request to try teen murderer as adult

Abhay@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Juvenile Justice Board has agreed to Delhi Police's request to try a 17-year-old boy, accused of murder in Welcome last year, as an adult.

The incident had happened on May 8. The complainant in the case told police that he and his 14-year-old friend had returned from work together that day. "While heading home, my friend told me that he would meet me at a bakery in the neighbourhood after some time. We met at the bakery around midnight. When my friend went to drink water from a nearby tap, the accused came from behind and grabbed him by his collar. He then stabbed him multiple times with a knife. The accused claimed that he had passed information about him to someone," the complainant stated.

The 14-year-old boy was attacked several times and he was declared dead at the hospital. A case under Section 302 (murder) of IPC was registered. Cops had apprehended the accused.

Sources said that during investigation, cops found that the 17-year-old boy had committed the offence after planning and without any provoca-

The 14-year-old boy was attacked several times and he was declared dead at the hospital. A case under Section 302 (murder) of IPC was registered

tion. During assessment, it was also found that the boy was not suffering from any psychological or psychiatric illness.

A senior officer said that a few days ago, JJB ordered that the accused should be tried in this murder case as an adult.

This was not the first case where the board granted permission to try a juvenile as an adult. Last year, it had agreed to Delhi Police's request to try two boys as adults who were accused of being involved in the murder of a man in Vivek Vihar. In 2022, the board had accepted the police's request to try a 17-year-old juvenile as an adult who allegedly brutally murdered a man in Jahangirpuri and recorded video of the incident. In the same year, Delhi Police had written to JJB to try the accused as an adult in the murder case of a specially-abled teenager in Safdarjung Development Area.

Context: Juvenile Justice Board has agreed to Delhi Police's request to try a 17-year-old boy, accused of murder.

Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)

- **About:** Indian quasi-judicial bodies that decide whether juveniles accused of a crime should be tried as an adult.
- **Formed by:** Juvenile Justice Boards were formed by State Governments.
- **Statutory Status:** Set up under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.
- **Members:** Each Juvenile Justice Board consists of one first-class judicial magistrate and two social workers at least one of whom is a woman.
- **Tenure:** Terms last two years for those of ages 35–65 .
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Women and Child Development .
- **Function:**
 - To be informed of the details on the presence of children and their parents/guardians during the proceedings before the board.
 - Ensure protection of children's rights during the course of legal proceedings.
 - Provide a translator or interpreter if he/she is unable to understand the language used in legal proceedings.
 - Ensure that proceedings are followed in accordance with section 14 of the Juvenile Justice Act.
 - Any other functions assigned to the board as per the Juvenile Justice Act.

Soren's WhatsApp chats suggest 'money appears to be generated' by 'transfer postings': ED in special court

ABHISHEK ANGAD
RANCHI, FEBRUARY 7

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate Wednesday told a special court in Ranchi that former Chief Minister Hemant Soren allegedly had several incriminating chats on WhatsApp with a close aide about transfer postings, exchanged confidential information about several properties, and shared government records.

Soren's five-day custody ended Wednesday, after which the ED produced him in the Special Court of Dinesh Rai. The PMLA court granted the ED five-day custody. Soren was arrested January 31 for his alleged involvement in ownership of 8.5 acres of land.

ED, in its remand note, told the court: "The WhatsApp chat not only includes exchange of confidential information regarding several properties but other incriminating information relating to transfer posting, sharing of government records, etc, out of which a huge amount of money appears to have been generated and transacted. In addition to this, (the close aide) has WhatsApp chats with several other persons in relation to transfer posting of officials, possession and sharing of several admit cards of students appearing for competitive exams held by Jharkhand Staff Selection Commission, etc."

ED told the court that Soren was requested to produce his phone on which he had the chats. "However, he has deliberately not produced his mobile in order to conceal facts and stall investigation," it alleged, adding there has been blatant misuse of power in hampering evidence linked with this case.

FULL REPORT

Context: The Directorate of Enforcement told a special court that former Chief Minister Hemant Soren allegedly had several incriminating chats on WhatsApp with a close aide about transfer postings, exchanged confidential information about several properties, and shared government records .

Enforcement Directorate (Ed)

- **About:** The Directorate of Enforcement is a multi-disciplinary organization mandated with investigation of offence of money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws.
- **Origin:**
- The origins of this Directorate can be traced back to May 1, 1956, when the Department of Economic Affairs established an 'Enforcement Unit' to handle Exchange Control Laws violations under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), 1947.
- **Nodal minister:** Department of Revenue of the Ministry of Finance.
- **Appointment of ED director:**
 - The ED director is appointed as per provisions of the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.
 - The Centre appoints the director on recommendation of a committee, with the Central Vigilance Commissioner as chairperson.
 - Other committee members are secretaries in the Finance (Revenue), Home and Personnel & Training ministries.
- **Tenure:** The Director holds a fixed tenure of 2 years, with the possibility of a maximum of 3 annual extensions.

SC pulls up NGT for 'unilateral decisions', asks it to act with 'procedural integrity'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 7

IN AN unusual order, the Supreme Court has pulled up the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for its "recurrent engagement" in "unilateral decision making" and cautioned that in "its zealous quest for justice, the tribunal must tread carefully to avoid the oversight of propriety".

These hard hitting observations were made by a bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Aravind Kumar in its verdict on appeals filed by a Delhi-based business enterprises, which has challenged two orders of the green panel where it had slapped fine on the firm, in a suo motu proceedings for polluting the environment, without even giving it an opportunity to be heard.

"The National Green Tribunal's recurrent engagement in unilateral decision making, provisioning ex-post facto review hearings and routinely dismissing it has regrettably become a prevailing norm. In its zealous quest for justice, the tribunal must tread carefully to avoid the oversight of propriety," the bench said in its

January 30 order, uploaded on Wednesday.

It added that the practice of ex-parte orders and the imposition of damages amounting to crores of rupees, have proven to be a counterproductive force in the broader mission of environmental safeguarding.

The bench said that significantly, these orders of the NGT have consistently faced stays from the apex court, resulting in the unravelling of the commendable efforts put forth by the members, lawyers, and other stakeholders.

"It is imperative for the tribunal to infuse a renewed sense of procedural integrity, ensuring that its actions resonate with a harmonious balance between justice and due process. Only then can it reclaim its standing as a beacon of environmental protection, where well-intentioned endeavours are not simply washed away," it said.

The bench noted that these appeals arise out of two orders passed by the NGT on August 31, 2021 and on November 26, 2021.

"The main order arises out of an ex parte order in suo motu proceedings holding the appellants to be guilty and directing payment of compensation.

Context: The Supreme Court has pulled up the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for its "recurrent engagement" in "unilateral decision making".

National Green Tribunal:

- **About:** The NGT was established by an Act of the Parliament i.e., National Green Tribunal, Act, 2010.
- **Objective:** NGT was established for the effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- **Inspired From:**
 - The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held at Stockholm in 1972.
 - The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
 - The Constitution of India under Article 21.
- **Features:**
 - The Tribunal shall not be bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, or the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
 - It shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
 - the Tribunal is vested with the powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure for discharging its functions.
 - It has both original and appellate jurisdiction
 - Disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.
 - The Tribunal's orders are binding and it can also grant relief in the form of compensation and damages to affected persons.

Music without borders

The Grammys were a celebration of women singers, past and present

Time stood still twice at the 66th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday when iconic singer-songwriters Joni Mitchell and Tracy Chapman took the stage to tell stories one more time through music. While the 80-year-old Mitchell, who had suffered a life-threatening aneurysm some years ago, performed her 1968 song, 'Both Sides Now', Tracy Chapman, 59, accompanied by her guitar and Luke Combs, belted out her classic hit, 'Fast Car' – both numbers powerful markers of the human experience and still speaking to the times. As if on cue, Annie Lennox, who paid tribute to Sinead O'Connor by reprising her haunting song, 'Nothing Compares 2 U', shouted at the end of her performance: 'Artists for ceasefire. Peace in the world'. After that, two ongoing wars and other social crises appeared forgotten for the most part of the show, though the super indie group, boygenius, who won for 'best rock performance', advocated for a ceasefire through red pins on their attire. After years of being pulled up for not celebrating female, black, Hispanic artists enough, the Grammys made amends this time by honouring a host of young women musicians. 'Swifties' were duly acknowledged by helping Taylor Swift make history with her record-setting fourth album of the year award for 'Midnights', surpassing Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder and Paul Simon, who won the award three times.

Miley Cyrus ('Flowers'), Billie Eilish ('What Was I Made For?'), a melancholic melody for Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* and SZA all got their moment in the spotlight. India made a mark too with a belated nod coming in for one of the country's best-known fusion bands, Shakti, which bagged the Best Global Music Album for 'This Moment', a studio album they released after four decades. The band, formed in the 1970s to critical acclaim and fame, later regrouped and brought out an album in 2023 with founding members, guitarist John McLaughlin and tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, joining vocalist Shankar Mahadevan, percussionist V. Selvaganesh and violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan. Zakir Hussain won two more Grammys, one with flutist Rakesh Chaurasia, and two other performers, for their song 'Pashto' which won in the Best Global Music Performance category. In the past, the Grammys have honoured and celebrated the music of Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, A. R. Rahman and others. But Indian artists of today, who play a mind-boggling array of instruments, from the sitar, sarod and veena to the flute, mridangam and violin, can now aspire to claim their rightful place on the global stage and be open to collaborations which have brought musicians such as Zakir Hussain accolades and recognition.

Context: At Grammy Awards 2024, Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain's Shakti band won the Best Global Music Album for the album This Moment .

Grammy Awards

- **About:** The Grammy Award is an annual recognition presented by the Recording Academy of the United States to recognize outstanding achievements in the music industry.
- **Started:** 1957
- **Awarded in:** To honour Musical artists, composition, and albums.
- **India's performances in 2024 awards:**
 - Shakti, comprising Zakir Hussain, Shankar Mahadevan, John McLaughlin, Ganesh Rajagopalan, and Selvaganesh Vinayakram, won the 2024 Grammy for their album "This Moment."
 - Zakir Hussain clinches an additional pair of victories, securing two more Grammys at the ceremony.

Zakir Hussain

- **About:** He is an Indian tabla player, composer, percussionist, music producer and film actor.
- **He is awarded with:** Padma Shri in 1988, the Padma Bhushan in 2002, and the Padma Vibhushan in 2023, by the Government of India.
 - Also awarded: Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1990, Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship, Ratna Sadsya in 2018.
 - ✓ In 1999, he was awarded the United States National Endowment for the Arts' National Heritage Fellowship, the highest award given to traditional artists and musicians.

Over 20,000 FCRA licences cancelled, most from T.N.

If cancellations are expressed as a share of FCRA licences given, then Uttar Pradesh tops the list

DATA POINT

Arjun Nigam
Anvika Jha
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

Last week, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case of alleged Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) violation against human rights activist Harsh Mander and his NGO Centre for Equity Studies (CES). FIBs were registered based on a complaint from the Union Home Ministry. The agency allegedly found that the NGO transferred some amount to certain individuals from the FCRA account, apart from salary/retirement, which is a violation of the Act.

The action against CES is the latest incident in a series of measures against civil society and NGOs. Last month, FCRA registration of Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research (CPR) and World Vison India were cancelled. In 2022, the Home Ministry had recommended a CBI investigation into Odisha for allegedly violating FCRA provisions. CBI also conducted searches and registered a case against some portal NewsClick for violating FCRA in December 2022.

The government uses FCRA to regulate the foreign funds received by NGOs "to prevent any possible diversion for activities detrimental to national interest." Organisations have to compulsorily register under the Act if they wish to receive foreign funding. Over 20,000 FCRA licences have been cancelled till February 4.

Chart 1 shows the year-wise break-up of cancellations. It shows that cancellations have spiked in certain years – 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009. Especially in 2005, over 10,000 cancellations were recorded. In other years, cancellations rarely crossed into the double digits. It is important to note that not all cancellations were due to violations, as many were also done to

remove multiple registrations for the same organisation.

Cancellation of licences is not the only way in which organisations are denied foreign money. Changes in the law meant that FCRA registration is not permanent and needs renewal once in five years. Data from Lok Sabha show that 783 renewal applications were denied between 2019 and 2021.

Chart 2 shows the State-wise number of active, expired and cancelled FCRA licences. Tamil Nadu leads the list with 2,580 FCRA licences of organisations registered in the State getting cancelled to date. Close to 1,570 licences expired in the State, also the highest among States. Notably, the State still has over 2,500 FCRA licences active, again the highest among States. Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka are other States with a high number of cancellations. If cancellations are expressed as a share of all FCRA licences given, then Uttar Pradesh tops the list, with over 90% cancellations followed by Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Telangana and West Bengal with over 40% cancellations. A break-up of organisations with an active FCRA licence shows that most of them are engaged in educational and social service, while religious NGOs – most dominated by those registered as Christian organisations – also form a significant share, as shown in table 3.

While Tamil Nadu has the largest number of organisations with an active FCRA licence, they received the third highest amount (2,507 crore) of foreign contribution in this route in FY22 (Chart 4). Organisations registered in Delhi received 15,809 crore in the period, the highest among all States/UTs, followed by Karnataka (3,141 crore). Organisations in Gujarat and Telangana have received over 1,000 crore.

Noticia Jha is a student at Asian College of Journalism.

Denying foreign funding

The data for charts and tables were sourced from Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act portal maintained by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Rajya Sabha answers



Chart 1: The chart shows the year-wise break-up of FCRA cancellations

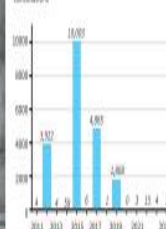


Chart 2: The chart shows the State-wise number of active, expired and cancelled FCRA licences till date



Table 1: The table shows the break-up of organisations with an active FCRA licence

State/UT	Religious organisations	Religious	Charities	Non-profits	Total
TN	85	505	1,000	2,174	
Maharashtra	65	723	1,205	2,488	
Karnataka	83	440	1,200	2,211	
Delhi	44	125	793	2,214	
Kerala	38	429	493	1,158	
Andhra	27	320	401	1,094	
Odisha	127	155	446	768	
WB	52	120	779	799	
Telangana	31	149	481	658	
UP	83	96	427	595	

Chart 4: The chart shows State-wise foreign contribution received in FY 2022 (in ₹ crore)



Context: The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case of alleged Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) violation against human rights activist Harsh Mander and his NGO Centre for Equity Studies (CES). .

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA):

- **About:** Regulates the receiving and use of foreign contributions by individuals and corporations established in India.
- **Established in:** The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 has come into effect from 2011.
- **Objectives:** The law sought to regulate foreign donations to individuals and associations so that they functioned "in a manner consistent with the values of a sovereign democratic republic."
- **Apply to:**
 - Citizens of India outside India.
 - Associate branches or subsidiaries, outside India, of companies or bodies corporate, registered or incorporated in India.
- **FCRA requires every person or NGO seeking to receive foreign donations:**
 - Registered under the Act.
 - To open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds in State Bank of India, Delhi.
 - To utilize those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received and as stipulated in the Act.
 - They are also required to file annual returns.
 - They must not transfer the funds to another NGO.
- **The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign funds:**
 - By candidates for elections.
 - Journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies.
 - Judges and government servants.
 - Members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers.

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