

The Federal News

CBI registers case against Tamil Nadu NGO under FCRA

<https://thefederal.com/news/cbi-registers-case-against-tamil-nadu-ngo-under-fcra/>

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has registered a case against Madurai-based Centre for Promotion of Social Concerns (CPSC) under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976.

The move comes at a time when the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has refused to renew the FCRA registration of nearly 6,000 non-governmental organisations in the country, including many run by minorities.

CPSC was founded by well-known human rights activist Henri Tiphagne. It runs a programme unit called 'People's Watch'.

Based on a complaint dated July 22, 2014, by the then director in the ministry, AK Sinha, the economic wing of the CBI has booked the organisation for FCRA violations.

The ministry conducted two inspections: in 2012 (for the period between 2006-2007 and 2010-2011), and in 2014 (between 2011-2012 to 2012-2013). During the inspections, it was found that CPSC had withdrawn ₹28 lakh in July 2012 after the suspension of FCRA accounts of the organisation. The complaint has also alleged that there is a lack of bills for ₹1.69 crore, which was withdrawn between 2008-2009 and May 2012.

The complaint added that People's Watch was acting like a separate entity and most of the vouchers and bills were in the name of the programme unit. An FIR was also filed based on these charges and a search was carried in the organisation on January 8.

The news has created a furore among the human rights activists, since People's Watch is known for taking on issues such as custodial deaths, caste atrocities and extrajudicial killings.

On January 9 Tiphagne released a video statement. He said: "The Union government believes that by intimidating us in these ways, we, the human rights workers, can be silenced.

"The CPSC was founded in 1981 and from 1982, we are giving proper records to the government. No rules have been violated. In 1995, People's Watch started. From 2010, even before the FCRA amendment came into existence, our accounts were properly audited and shown to the committee of concerned citizens. These are the people in Madurai who are working with a cause towards the society. Then, we also followed this tradition in Chennai, where former bureaucrats would look into our books."

"In 2012, for the first time the ministry searched our offices in May. In July, they suspended our FCRA account. According to the law, the account can be suspended only for 180 days. But they extended their suspension on 179th day. This was repeated

two more times. So for more than one-and-a-half years our account was suspended,” Tiphagne added.

Towards the end of the first suspension, the ministry came out with 21 observations and said they were extending the suspension for the second time, so that the NGO would have sufficient time to answer for those observations, he said. In 2014, the organisation got back its accounts and again in 2016, its FCRA renewal was rejected. It was revoked in 2017.

“In 2016, we filed a plea against suspension of our accounts with the National Human Rights Commission. Responding to the plea, the ministry in its reply, Para 5, said that it has submitted reports on human rights violations to the United Nations, working hand in hand with its special rapporteurs. They also added that we should be prevented from working with embassies. By this, it is obvious that the ministry’s problem is not about the money we are getting but the work we do. If they try to use such activities and think they can stop us, it would be wrong,” added Tiphagne.

IBTimes India

REDIO to rescue distressed Indians abroad; Dnyaneshwar Mulay to unite diaspora

<https://www.ibtimes.co.in/redio-rescue-distressed-indians-abroad-dnyaneshwar-mulay-unite-diaspora-844571>

Indians living abroad have accomplished a great deal, but not all are success stories that leave you inspired. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, there were issues of various kinds faced by Indian diaspora living abroad. From legal problems to immigration and employment to exploitation, Indians living abroad have faced a fair share of problems and litigations - often left with no solution. On many occasions, the Indian government and Indian missions abroad have rose to the occasion, but the contributions made by some influential NRIs cannot go completely unnoticed. Now, there's an initiative to unite Indian diaspora for the noble cause of helping distressed nationals living abroad.

Former Indian diplomat Dr Dnyaneshwar Mulay (IFS '83), who is the NHRC human rights commission member, is spearheading an initiative of "Rescuing Every Distressed Indian Overseas", hence REDIO. While Mulay is the founder and chief patron of REDIO in the US, NY-based social activist Prem Bhandari will serve as the chairman.

How REDIO is on mission to rescue distressed Indians abroad; voluntary services on civilian level wins accolades

Dnyaneshwar Mulay honoured New York-based 17-year-old Rajasthani expatriate Nikhil Mehta at the launch of REDIO

Mulay came up with the idea of REDIO on April 14, 2016, during a meeting with Prem Bhandari, who organised the Jaipur foot USA artificial limb fitment camp in MHOW to commemorate 125th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar. The idea was to spread the access to justice for every Indian, which was pursued by Ambedkar in his life.

REDIO initiative was launched on the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas. January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since, in 1915, Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, had returned to India from South Africa, on this day, and led the country's Freedom Struggle which changed the lives of Indians forever.

"Greetings to everyone, especially the Indian diaspora on Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas. Our diaspora has distinguished itself all over the world and has excelled in different spheres. At the same time, they have remained connected to their roots. We are proud of their accomplishments," PM Narendra Modi said, greeting everyone on the occasion.

REDIO — Helping Indians globally

How REDIO is on mission to rescue distressed Indians abroad; voluntary services on civilian level wins accolades

How REDIO is on mission to rescue distressed Indians abroad; voluntary services on civilian level wins accolades

In the short run, REDIO is expected to help distressed Indians in any part of the world. But the long-term goal is to build synergy among all the Indians who are spread globally so they gain social, political and cultural strength wherever they are. While Indians are doing extremely well in abroad countries, they still face various issues, ranging from discrimination to abuse depending on the residing country. This can dramatically change when over 30 million overseas Indians decide to come together and help each other in a structured manner.

It is important for our diaspora to work as a support group since our diaspora is spread in over 150 countries. They certainly can afford to stand by other Indians who are less privileged. This will provide an interesting dimension to grievance redressal. The government has been doing extraordinary work in helping overseas Indians who are in distress. The civil society, too, can contribute in its own way as there is a space for it to come forward and complement the government's efforts wherever required," Mulay told International Business Times, while speaking about the inception of REDIO.

REDIO's aim is to have a support group for distressed Indians in every country, which is known to everyone and is helping people on a voluntary basis. There is a huge response to such an initiative under the current structure in more than 20 countries. Highlighting the role of Prem Bhandari, who is leading such efforts in the US and different parts of the world for more than a decade, Mulay said there are people in Thailand, Kenya, China and Japan who are productively working for the distressed Indians.

Caption: Jaipur foot USA event in Indian consulate New York Dr rekha bhandari and prem bhandari welcoming the then ED world bank Subhash Garg and Gyaneshwer Muley

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"We have contacted number of prominent people involved in community services from across the globe and now we have advisors in over 20 countries," Mulay, the former Secretary in the Union Ministry for External Affairs, said.

Mulay was instrumental in spearheading various initiatives of outreach to the Indian diaspora during his time at the Consul General of India, NY. He worked in Ministries of Finance, Commerce, External Affairs and Cabinet Secretariat. Besides creating a strong framework to help Indians stranded in overseas countries, Mulay was also responsible for opening 450 new passport offices in the country between 2016-19 period.

At MHOW Jaipur foot USA camp on 14 th April 2016 to commomrate 125 th birth anniversary of baba sab Bhim Rao Ambedkar where this REDIO idea was discussed: brain child of gyaneshwer Muley

At MHOW Jaipur Foot USA camp on 14th April 2016 to commemorate 125th birth anniversary of Bhim Rao Ambedkar where this REDIO idea was discussed.

"Mulay played a crucial role in driving major passport reforms in India," Prem Bhandari, who has been helping distressed Indians for more than a decade, said calling Mulay the "Passport man of India." Some of his notable achievements are:

Speaking about REDIO, his latest initiative to help the distress Indian diaspora in different parts of the world, Mulay said that "such a holistic structure at a civil society level was never thought of before. In that sense, it will harness the unexplored and unexploited goodwill that India has abroad in the form of Indian diaspora. It will be a new and creative idea that will help Indians overseas when they face problems of any kind."

At the event, Dnyaneshwar Mulay honoured New York-based 17-year-old Rajasthani expatriate Nikhil Mehta, who is the Chief Youth Coordinator of Jaipur Foot in the United States, by giving him 2021 Innovation Award. Nikhil Mehta was instrumental in life-saving initiatives like "Oxygen on Wheels" amid COVID-19 pandemic.