

Biggest blaze since 2019 puts Delhi's fire safety rules back in focus

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/biggest-blaze-since-2019-puts-delhi-s-fire-safety-rules-back-in-focus-101652553866929.html>

An official from Delhi Fire Services, who asked not to be named, said that there are several areas in Delhi where even fire tenders cannot enter because of rampant unauthorised constructions

The tragic death of 27 people in a major fire in the Mundka building on Friday has underlined that the city authorities have learned little from similar incidents in the past that exposed the utter lack of safety mechanisms and the gaping holes in their implementation.

The Mundka building, according to an inquiry by the North MCD, had no sanctioned plan and was operating a factory without licence -- same as the building in north Delhi's Anaj Mandi area where a fire in 2019 killed 43 people.

Hundreds of such buildings still operate from congested quarters with civic, police and fire authorities struggling to curb them.

Two separate panels were formed after the Anaj Mandi fire to lay down an action plan to tackle the problem of illegal industrial activities going on from residential areas. The panels were formed after the National Human Rights Commission took suo motu cognizance of the matter.

The first one, a special task force, was formed by the ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA). The second, an interdepartmental committee, was headed by the chief town planner of the South MCD. The committee submitted the action plan in 2020, and the STF gave its recommendations in 2021. Both, however, have not been implemented yet, a senior official said.

A municipal official, who was part of the committee, said that the remedial action plan included the identification of vulnerable areas and formulation of detailed disaster management plans which was to be implemented in some areas, and then enforced in the entire city. "In residential areas with dense population, we suggested setting up fire hydrant systems with common water tanks, the alteration of road widths at key intersection points to allow movement of fire tenders, and the urgent tackling of unauthorised constructions, among other measures," the official said, requesting anonymity.

Jai Prakash, former mayor of the north corporation, said despite several fire accidents in the city, there has been no action. "No redevelopment work was carried out in Anaj Mandi. Making announcements about creating a world-class city should only after the agencies concerned have the city a safer place for its residents," he added.

The Delhi Development Authority did not respond to queries on the implementation of the remedial action plan despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile, an official from Delhi Fire Services, who asked not to be named, said that there are several areas in Delhi where even fire tenders cannot enter because of rampant unauthorised constructions. "Committees were formed after the Anaj Mandi and Arpit Palace Hotel fires, but nothing concrete happened, and ultimately the regulations were diluted," the official said.

To be sure, in case of the Anaj Mandi fire, the probe report for fixing culpability of officials was never made public.

In the aftermath of the Arpit Palace Hotel fire, a series of stricter norms was announced by the government on May 27, 2019. However, four months later, the

Delhi government's urban development department issued an order to Delhi Fire Services and the civic bodies relaxing some of the norms based on representations of associations to the urban development minister.

The September order undersigned by the deputy director (local bodies) said: "Instead of imposing the condition that fire safety certificate may be granted only if the floors above 3rd floor are closed/sealed by way of brick wall, we may instead obtain an affidavit from the hotel owners that such spaces will not be used for anything which violates any of the clauses stipulated in earlier notification."

Delhi government spokespersons did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Praveen Khandelwal, general secretary of Confederation of All India Traders said that the city needs to take a holistic view of the industrial sector to prevent such fires. "Along the lines of regularising unauthorised colonies, a scheme can be brought out to incentivise structural and building norms corrections in such industrial units. In many cases, faulty electricity meters and wires cause short circuits and must be overhauled. In case of industries operating on narrow streets, authorities should relocate them in open areas," he added.

Sedition law may not witness a sea change

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/comment/section-124a-political-and-legal-drama-is-that-the-govt-has-pre-empted-the-court-from-doing-what-it-wanted-to-do-and-it-has-given-a-vague-suggestion-in-its-affidavit-as-to-how-it-wants-to-deal-with-it-review-the-issue-at-an-appropriate-forum-the-court-s-expectation-that-the-govt-will-not-file-cases-under-section-124a-or-pursue-investigation-under-it-anymore-is-to-be-treated-as-an-indirect-directive-394577>

What we have seen in the Section 124A political and legal drama is that the govt has pre-empted the court from doing what it wanted to do, and it has given a vague suggestion in its affidavit as to how it wants to deal with it — review the issue at an appropriate forum. The court's expectation that the govt will not file cases under Section 124A or pursue investigation under it anymore is to be treated as an indirect directive.

IT would be quite naïve to believe that the odious Section 124A (sedition) of the IPC has been thrown into the dustbin of history, and that is the end of the story. The Supreme Court was hearing the case and going by the precedent set in the court's verdict in the 2021 Vinod Dua case, it would have considerably modified many of the conditions of the sedition law without quashing it. The government did not accept that Section 124A was either egregious or a mere evolutionary vestige of past politics. The government has never professed itself to be liberal when it came to the issue of the State and its powers. The Union Home Ministry had referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's views favouring human rights and civil liberties, but that did not allow the government to say that it plans to do away with the sedition law.

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It would have been better if the Supreme Court had arrived at its own view in the matter, and the government did what it wanted to do. But now, the issue has become tangled. The law is in a state of suspension. It has not gone. It is like the fabled sword of Damocles. Union Law Minister Kiren Rijju had given a hint of the government's thinking that it had to keep in mind the security of the State and balance it against the demands of civil liberties. So, if the government were to dump Section 124A as a colonial-era law, it would replace it with its own version of what it is to turn against the State. And it must be conceded, that whatever the political hue of the party in power, centrist like that of the Congress or right-wing like that of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), it becomes incumbent to keep in place a law that defends the existence of the State and deals with individuals and groups that challenge the existence of the State. We have not yet reached the nirvanic state of politics when it takes up cudgels against the State, short of overthrowing it.

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When hearings began in the case, Attorney General KK Venugopal had rightly argued that in the Kedarnath Singh case, the court has taken the right position and there is no need to review it. What he meant was that enough protection was provided for liberties while retaining the sedition provisions. Of course, the court would have perhaps expanded the protections for liberty and diluted further Section 124A. It was quite unlikely that it would have quashed the section completely.

The political aspect of Section 124A is the most interesting issue. So, Modi might say that he believes in human rights and civil liberties, though he did not give this impression when he spoke at the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) anniversary celebrations in October last year, emphasising duties over rights.

It is then to be expected from the government that it will formulate Section 124A in an 'appropriate' language citing the threat of terrorism to the existence of the Indian State, and therefore a threat to the Indian nation and people. The government has been appropriating old ideas, and one of the ways of doing it is to make new laws based on old principles. It would not be right to blame the powers that be for believing in a mailed-fist State because it is part of their anti-libertarian and anti-individualist political ideology. The BJP believes in the legitimacy and glory of the collective and not that of the individual, and it believes that the State is the expression of the will of the people.

Countering the fake narrative

<https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/countering-the-fake-narrative/>

Dr Satya Dev Gupta

Quoting dialogue from the Bollywood movie “Kashmir Files” a female actor, Pallavi Joshi who acted as a professor Radhika Menon committed to Left-wing ideology in JNU like university narrated “Although they have the governing authority the system of implementation of Government policies lies with us” The film is based on a true story depicting the atrocities on Kashmiri Hindus (Kashmiri Pandits) 32 years ago, 19th January 1990, in the present context of Narendra Modi Government, where some assertive civil society members of the judiciary system, journalism, media, universities, trade unions, Bollywood, socio-political groups etc. become obstacles to enactment and execution of laws or reforms beneficial for the society. The recent incident of Jahangir puri in Delhi could be cited where Supreme Court is moved to execute a matter of petty affair. The statements are being issued even against the Supreme Court judgements. There are many instances where this intelligentsia had taken a stand on wrong matters and put a formidable resistance against the government in implementing the policies beneficial for the society.

Introduction of system

As living beings have different systems for working and keeping themselves healthy, similarly different organizations, corporations, countries and even the world must depend upon efficient, logical, productive and effective methodology for existence, progress and keeping alive. We are confining to our own country in this article. Here are the few headings under which the system modality can be unfolded.

Education

Education plays a vital role in bringing up and building individuals and society. We had a wonderful heritage of system of education in our country. We had Guru Shishyas traditions, where all the persons irrespective of caste and creed could get the instructions and schooling in the Ashrams. We had different ancient Universities, and important institutions of learning like Takhashila, Nalanda, Vikrashila, Ujjain, Kashmir Smast, Sharda Peeth, Pushpagiri Vihara etc which were plundered physically by barbarian invaders. During the British period, it was T.B.Macauley who planned to destroy tactically the Indian system of education, self-esteem, and spiritual and cultural heritage. This is decoded from his speech delivered in British Parliament on 2nd February 1835. He did acknowledge the progress made by Indians in various fields of science, culture, arts, civic management, mathematics etc. but at the same time proposed the ways to rule this country for longer-term. If they (English) succeed in infusing an idea in their (Indian) minds that what all from foreign and British is good and greater than their own, they will lose their self-esteem and they will become a truly dominated nation. British policy prevailed and continued in post-independent time by the efforts of the followers of Macaulay but the sons of the soil.

First Education Minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who was from Saudi Arabia, penned a book “India wins freedom” has controversial notes in the latest edition released after his death, never received formal education and was self-taught in English. and learned traditional Islamic education from his scholarly father. Sir Sayyad Ahmed Khan, a controversial personality first to recite the Two Nations Theory. Maulana Azad gave an impetus to the Arabic Madrasa system of education in free India. Indian system of education was based on Western outlook of Nehruvian philosophy, Left-wing Ideology, and Islamic doctrines for almost 70 years. This period was dominated by the Government, aided and definite agenda carried by left

leaned persons including politicians, scholars, historians, bureaucrats etc. who moulded and modified the "System" in a way as suited them. As a policy matter, the Left has fundamental doctrines to infiltrate all the key holding systems like education, trade unions, media, journalism, intelligentsia, bureaucracy, judiciary and vital positions in other setups.

They demonized everything concerning India, traditional culture and Hindus. Age-old history was distorted, the brutal invaders were glorified, false narratives were coined and the splendid achievements of Indians in past were vilified.

False Narratives

After 2014 as the NDA government led by Narendra Modi took the reins, a series of literature award inclined to Congress, Pseudo-secularists, and Left philosophy started returning their honours to exhibit and reflect that they didn't want so-called Right-wing, communal and reactionary leaders or party to rule this country. In this course and endeavour, no stone was left unturned for the last seven years. In the recent past on 26th April 2022, they wrote an open letter to Prime Minister with 17 comments and signatures of 108 members of CCG "Constitutional Conduct Group" (An anti-BJP, anti-Modi, Left and Pseudo-secularists with specifically designed agendas). It states " We are witnessing a frenzy of hate-filled destruction in the country where at the sacrificial altar are not just Muslims and members of the other minority communities but the Constitution itself. As former civil servants, it is not normally our wont to express ourselves in such extreme terms (read more); this group of dignified personalities has always advocated terms on the lines of fundamental principles of Left liberals, challenging the Constitutional institutions, standing in favour of divisive elements, always condemning Hindu organizations, and have gratified the disruptive forces even at the expense of the sovereignty of the country.

Challenge to "System"

In response on 30th April 2022, "Concerned Citizens" of former judges, ex-diplomats, former public servants and armed forces officers on Saturday backed Modi Government in an open letter written to Prime Minister, signed by 197 dignitaries called the previous letter as "Agenda Driven" and "Politicized" statements are not acceptable. The reality is that this is a manifest political anti-Modi Government exercise which this group undertakes periodically in the belief that they can shape public opinion against the ruling dispensation." This is a way for them to release their frustration that public opinion remains solidly behind Prime Minister Modi as recent state elections have shown", the letter said. The letter said " these open letters repeat the same language, have the same tenor and use biased terms with clear ideological moorings speaks for itself."

"Strangely, one often notices a striking similarity between the phraseology of CCG missives and utterances in the western media or by western agencies", it further said. The statement hits out at what is called the " studied silence of this so-called CCG on unprecedented post-poll violence in West Bengal-which was so serious that the Kolkata High Court had to mandate the National Human Rights Commission to carry out an independent investigation. The letter said the same attitude shapes their reactions to multiple violent incidents in various states ruled by different political parties (premeditated attacks on peaceful processions during Ram Navami, Hanuman Jayanti, and other sacred festivals in Rajasthan Madhya Pradesh, Gujrat and New Delhi) and targeted violation of human rights adversely affecting the livelihood of the poor irrespective of their religion."

" The reality is that instances of major communal violence have probably decreased under the BJP government, and this is appreciated by the public. This has instigated groups like CCG to highlight beyond proportion sporadic instances of communal violence that no society can entirely eradicate", it said. Their " anger and anguish" is not only empty virtue-signaling, but they are also fueling the Politics of hate they seek to combat by attempting to engineer hate against the present government with their patent prejudices and false portrayals", said "Concerned Citizens". There are total of 197 Signatories to the letter including ex-Chief Justice to Sikkim High Court Pramod Kohli, ex-Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal, former foreign secretary Shashank and ex-RAW chief Sanjeev Tripathi.

NATIONAL LOSS

The aggressive student's agitations, guided by "Agenda Designed Intelligentsia" from some leading universities, against the government have culminated into a violent movement against the country's sovereignty, may it be for Maqbool Butt, Afzal Guru, lauding Mahishasur and disrespecting goddess Durga to molest and maltreat tolerant, open-minded, and unprejudiced Hindu society. Azad Maidan instance in Mumbai 2012 in UPA government reins marked with 2 deaths, 63 injured, damage of Rupees 2.74 crores and desecration of Amar Jawan Jyoti. In 2020-21 CAA (Citizens Amendment Act) was misinterpreted resulting in months-long agitation and Delhi Riots. Along the same lines, all that was good or bad in the Farmers Bill was not discussed on technical grounds but twisted in such a way by media, politicians, and agitating farmer's groups that nothing could be churned out from 15 months of struggle resulting in a situation where neither farmers nor government got any fruit out of this scuffle: and all that happened on Republic day (26th January 2021) shall be reminded as the Blackest Day in the democratic history of India. The wrangle that became a rabid bang ended into a whimper as the state assembly election ended. A renowned Economist Gautam Chikermane, vice president of Observer Research Foundation said their appeal would make it difficult for other governments to propose similar reforms. "The future of farmers has been sealed for the next quarter-century; no political party will have the courage to touch these reforms"

Henceforth it is concluded that all efforts should be done for uplifting the face of the country in every respect. Healthy criticism or discussions on critical matters should always be welcomed and agenda based political misadventures should be discouraged.

Just about 19% of Union budget spent in last 8 years to rehabilitate manual scavengers

<https://www.counterview.net/2022/05/just-about-19-of-union-budget-spent-in.html>

Sunday, May 15, 2022.

By Bharat Dogra*

While the Dalit community has been always known for higher levels of poverty as well as social discrimination, even within the Dalits there is a sub-section known for even worse levels of poverty as well as social discrimination. This is the section which was traditionally involved in manual scavenging.

The shocking injustice they have suffered from over the years has been widely recognized leading to a ban on manual scavenging. At the same time there is urgent need for the rehabilitation of those engaged in manual scavenging. Hence a self-employment scheme for the rehabilitation of those engaged in manual scavenging was drawn up. The allocations and the expenditure for this scheme for the last eight years are shown in the Table below:

By Budget Estimate we mean the original allocation made when the budget is presented. It is clear from this table that the actual expenditure since Narendra Modi came to power (Rs 236 crore) has been only about 19% of the allocations announced in the form of Budget Estimate (Rs. 1255 crore). This is shocking considering that perhaps this is the scheme which is most closely related to the welfare of the poorest of the poor.

If we also look at the latest budget for the year 2022-23 then the Budget Estimate is just Rs 70 crore, which is just 15% of the peak year allocation -- the Budget Estimate for 2015-16 was Rs 461 crore.

In fact the budget allocations and actual spending for this extremely important scheme have been most arbitrary, unpredictable and uncertain.

For such an important national scheme to be implemented properly, it should be reasonably assured of certain funding as a minimum. Only then you can plan properly and establish the infra-structure, the expertise and the woman power for the scheme.

After all, people have to be identified, approached and meetings have to be held with them regarding what sort of self-employment will work best for them. All this has to be done in the poorest and most neglected hamlets and often in very remote areas at the national level.

Here it may be mentioned that the work of identifying all deserving persons to be covered under this scheme is not an easy one as the most marginalized section of people are involved here and often the dominant persons may even try to deny their existence. Also while the old form of manual scavenging has been decreasing in a significant way, new forms have emerged and these have to be considered too.

As rehabilitation will not work in isolation, the wider community also has to be consulted and prepared for this. The support of community leaders has to be obtained. All this takes time, and there should be certainty that once the preparations are being made the necessary funds for the actual rehabilitation will be forthcoming. Trainings have to be arranged in various areas of self-employment.

Allocation has ranged from Rs 5 crore to Rs 461 crore annually, while actual expenditure has ranged from 0 to Rs 86 crore, not even once reaching 3 digits

Perhaps some new institution has to be created for this, or else existing institutions which will do this with the proper spirit have to be identified. Once so many people are being contacted and such high hopes of good rehabilitation are being raised then there has to be certainty that funds will be definitely available and there will be no let down. So there should be certainty of funds and an assurance that while there may be small changes but fund availability will not fall below a certain level.

As against such a need what do we see in reality? The huge and arbitrary changes from year to year do not make any sense at all, and it will certainly be very difficult to implement a well-planned scheme with continuity when fund availability is so arbitrary. Within a short period the allocation has ranged from Rs 5 crore to Rs 461 crore annually, while the actual expenditure has ranged from 0 to Rs 86 crore, not even once reaching 3 digits.

Here it may be pointed out that the latest national survey on manual scavengers was conducted in 2018, and after this there should have been a stepping up of this scheme but what we actually find in 2020-21 is that against the Budget Estimate of Rs 110 crore the actual expenditure goes down to the astonishingly low level of Rs 17 crore.

It is due to such terrible neglect that during the Covid days there were shocking reports of some persons earlier engaged in manual scavenging saying that they have not eaten for days as no alternative employment has been provided to them.

What is more, there was actually even greater need for stepping up the scheme as the estimates that became available in the 2018 census were widely believed to be big under-estimates. In fact the indicated level of this work as revealed in the socio-economic caste census 2011 for just the rural areas was about 4 times higher than what was indicated in the 2018 census, and for rural plus urban areas would have been higher.

Some years back while reporting on a small project of such rehabilitation in Jalaun district (UP) implemented by a voluntary organization Parmarth, I realized what a deeply heart-warming experience it can be for those engaged in manual scavenging to find new sources of employment with dignity.

So clearly this scheme of rehabilitation can be extremely enriching and creative, but to achieve success this must get much better support from the government, in terms of funds but also in terms of expertise and overall sincerity.

Organizations and persons working with great sincerity and commitment should also be involved in this.

*Honorary convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now; his recent books include "A Day in 2071" and "Navjeevan"

Dr Satya Dev Gupta

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Countering the fake narrative

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मानवाधिकार आयोग के सदस्य ने किया वृद्धाश्रम का दौरा



एनआइटी दो नंबर स्थित वृद्धाश्रम में मूलभूत सुविधाओं के बारे में जानकारी प्राप्त करते हरियाणा मानवाधिकार आयोग के सदस्य दीप भाटिया • सौ. डीआइपीआरओ

वि. फरीदाबाद : हरियाणा मानव अधिकार आयोग के सदस्य दीप भाटिया ने शनिवार को एनआइटी दो नंबर स्थित वृद्धाश्रम का दौरा किया। इस दौरान उनके साथ उनके साथ नगर निगम के संयुक्तायुक्त अनिल यादव, बड़खल की तहसीलदार नेहा, आयोग के विशेष सचिव ईश कुमार, जिला समाज कल्याण विभाग के अधिकारी मौजूद रहे। सदस्य दीप भाटिया ने बुजुर्गों से बातचीत की तथा उनकी भोजन व्यवस्था आदि के बारे में पूछा। समाज कल्याण विभाग के अधिकारियों ने बताया कि इस वृद्धाश्रम को कोई आर्थिक सहायता भी

सरकार की ओर से नहीं मिल रही है। दीप भाटिया ने इस बारे में संचालकों से अनुरोध किया है कि वे सरकार की स्कीम के तहत मिलने वाली सहायता के लिए आवेदन करें। फिर भी कोई दिक्कत आती है, तो आयोग से संपर्क करें। बुजुर्गों को उनके सभी अधिकार दिलवाए जाएंगे। आवश्यकता पड़ने पर बुजुर्गों को कानूनी सहायता भी प्रदान की जाएगी। सरकार द्वारा दी जा रही पेंशन स्कीम तथा अन्य स्कीमों का लाभ भी दिलवाया जाएगा उनके आधार कार्ड वह वोट बनवाने के लिए विशेष अभियान चलाने की प्रक्रिया भी करेंगे।

Biggest blaze since 2019 puts fire safety rules back in focus

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NEW DELHI: The tragic death of 27 people in a major fire in the Mundka building on Friday has underlined that the city authorities have learned little from similar incidents in the past that exposed the utter lack of safety mechanisms and the gaping holes in their implementation.

The Mundka building, according to an inquiry by the North MCD, had no sanctioned plan and was operating a factory without licence -- same as the building in north Delhi's Anaj Mandi area where a fire in 2019 killed 43 people.

Hundreds of such buildings still operate from congested quarters with authorities struggling to curb them.

Two separate panels were formed after the Anaj Mandi fire to lay down an action plan to tackle the problem of illegal industrial activities going on from residential areas. The panels were formed after the National Human Rights Commission took suo motu cognizance of the matter.

The first one, a special task force, was formed by the ministry of housing and urban affairs. The second, an interdepartmental committee, was headed by the chief town planner of the South MCD. The panel submitted the action plan in 2020, and the STF gave its recommendations in 2021. Both have not been implemented yet, a senior official said.

A municipal official, who was part of the committee, said that the remedial action plan included the identification of vulnerable areas and formulation of detailed disaster management plans which were to be implemented in some areas, and then enforced in the entire city. "In residential areas with dense population, we suggested setting up fire hydrant systems with common water tanks, the alteration of road widths at key intersection points to allow movement of fire tenders, and the urgent tackling of unauthorised constructions," the official said, requesting anonymity.

Jai Prakash, former mayor of the north corporation, said despite several fire accidents in the city, there has been no action. "Making



People at the Sanjay Gandhi Hospital on Saturday, mourning the death of their loved ones.

RAJ K RAI/HT

announcements about creating a world-class city should only take place after the agencies concerned have made the city a safer place for its residents," he added.

The Delhi Development Authority did not respond to queries on the implementation of the remedial action plan despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile, an official from Delhi Fire Services, who asked not to be named, said that there are several areas in Delhi where even fire tenders cannot enter because of rampant unauthorised constructions. "Committees were

formed after the Anaj Mandi and Arpit Palace Hotel fires, but nothing concrete happened," the official said.

To be sure, in case of the Anaj Mandi fire, the probe report for fixing culpability of officials was never made public.

In the aftermath of the Arpit Palace Hotel fire, a series of stricter norms was announced by the government on May 27, 2019. However, four months later, the Delhi government's urban development department issued an order to Delhi Fire Services and the civic bodies relaxing some of the norms

based on representations of associations to the urban development minister. The September order undersigned by the deputy director (local bodies) said: "Instead of imposing the condition that fire safety certificate may be granted only if the floors above 3rd floor are closed/sealed by way of brick wall, we may instead obtain an affidavit from the hotel owners that such spaces will not be used for anything which violates any of the clauses stipulated earlier."

Delhi government spokespersons did not respond to requests seeking comment.

Praveen Khandely, secretary of Confederation of India Traders said the city needs to take a holistic approach to the industrial sector to prevent fires. "Along the lines of the unauthorised construction scheme can be broadened to incentivise structural norms corrections in industrial units. In many cases, electricity meters and short circuits and many other things are hauled. In case of industrial units, if they are located on narrow streets, they should relocate to other areas," he added.