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1. Opposition Parties demand parliamentary probe into Tek Fog app (Jan. 8, 2022)

Reacting to a news report that Tek Fog app is being used to spread misinformation, make hate speeches and manipulate social media trends, opposition parties demanded the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs to take up the matter as such apps posed “severe danger” to national security. Separately, they also urged the Supreme Court to take note of news report on Tek Fog app, and have it examined by the expert panel that’s already looking into the alleged use of the Pegasus spyware on some Indian citizens.

What is Tek Fog App

According to “The Wire” Tek Fog is an application software used by the information technology cell of the Bharatiya Janata Party as part of their social media campaigning to spread propaganda.

- Tek Fog was used to manage large number of inauthentic accounts on social media.
- Tek Fog was capable of hacking inactive WhatsApp accounts in order to mass message their contacts with propaganda messages, while impersonating the account owner.
- The App can allow its users to take control of the trends on the social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Facebook by 'auto tweeting' and 'auto sharing' tweets and posts.
- The App has a cloud database where citizens store information about their age, occupation, religion, gender, political inclinations, and other physical attributes.
- The app also allows the user to completely delete all the evidence of the past activities they might have performed using the App

2. FCRA nod for Missionaries of Charity restored (Jan. 8, 2022)

The Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA) on Friday restored the FCRA **registration of missionaries of Charity (MoC),the Catholic religious congregation set up by Nobel laureate Mother Teresa.**

1. **The Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** registration is mandatory to receive foreign donations.
2. The registration of nearly 6,000 NGOs ceased to operate from January 1 as the MHA refused to renew their application or the NGOs did not apply for renewal.
3. After this decision by MHA came out, there was a debate in the U.K Parliament, seeking to know if the British government had raised with India the issue of blocking of overseas funds of the MoC or not.

For more details on FCRA kindly refer to the 28th December 2021 post.

3. Shri Rajnath Singh flags-in India’s first multi-dimensional adventure sports expedition conducted by NIMAS in France. (Jan. 7, 2022)

Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, on January 07, 2022, flagged-in India’s first multi-dimensional adventure sports expedition conducted by National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) in France.

- The expedition was conducted in November 2021 and the team was led by Director NIMAS Colonel Sarfaraz Singh, comprising 12 people - eight Army personnel and four youths of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The expedition team participated in winter trekking, cycling, scuba diving and paragliding.

NIMAS (National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports).

- It comes under the Ministry of Defence.
- It provides specialised training in mountaineering, adventure sports and mountain rescue

It is located in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh

4. Election Commission hikes expenditure limit for Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assembly Candidates (Jan. 7, 2022)

The Election Commission of India declared hike in expenditure limits for Lok Sabha candidates and also for State legislative Assembly candidates. This hike is after the last major hike in 2014. There was a 10% increase in 2020 due to Covid Pandemic.

- This is based on the report of a committee set up by the Election Commission which was set up in October 2021 and was asked to submit its report within 120 days.
- This is notified by The Ministry of Law and Justice through an amendment to the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.
- The expenditure limit is specified under Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules and any change requires the law ministry's approval.
- The expenditure limits vary from large states to small states based on population as per the 2001 census.
- The Bigger states include Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and the only UT of Delhi. Rest all other states and UT's come under small states.

The poll body increased the expenditure limit for the Lok Sabha constituencies to -

- Rs 95 lakh from the earlier threshold of Rs 70 lakh for bigger states and
- Rs 75 lakh from the earlier Rs 54 lakh for smaller states.

Likewise, the expenditure amount has been revised for assembly constituencies to

- Rs 40 lakh from earlier Rs 28 lakh in bigger states and
- Rs 28 lakh from Rs 20 lakh in smaller states

The committee decided based on the following-

- The **change in the number of electors(834 million in 2014 to 936 million in 2021)** across the States/Union Territories and its bearing on expenditure.

- **Change in Cost Inflation Index(an increase of 32.08% from 2014 to 2021-22)** and its bearing on the pattern of expenditure incurred by the candidates in recent elections.
- the political parties and other stakeholders like chief electoral officers, election observers etc.
- Other factors which may have bearings on expenditure like changing modes of campaigning, which is gradually shifting to the virtual and social media based digital campaigns.

5. Centre and State forms separate panels to probe PM's security lapse in Punjab (Jan. 7, 2022)

- The Centre and the Punjab government formed two separate committees to probe the security lapses that led to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy being stranded for about 20 minutes on a flyover in Ferozepur on 05th January 2022.
- **The Union Home Ministry said a three member committee of Sudhir Kumar Saxena, Secretary (Security), Cabinet Secretariat; Balbir Singh, Joint Director, Intelligence Bureau; and S. Suresh, Inspector General, Special Protection Group, will probe the serious lapses "which led to the exposure of the VVIP to grave security risk".**
- Charanjit Singh Channi led Punjab government has also set up a committee comprising Justice Mehtab Singh Gill (retd.) and Anurag Verma, Principal Secretary, Home Affairs, which would "carry out a thorough probe into the lapses that occurred during Prime Minister's visit to Ferozepur". The committee will submit its report within three days.
- A three Judge Bench of Supreme Court led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana is also hearing the matter urgently today.

6. Union Cabinet approves a host of foreign agreements (Jan. 7, 2022)

The Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved a host of agreements signed by the Indian government with foreign Governments in a meeting on 6 January 2021.

Some of the approved agreements are :

Turkmenistan :- It approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Turkmenistan on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Management.

Spain :- It approved the signing of the Agreement between India and Spain on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Customs Matters.

Nepal:- It approved the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Nepal for construction of a bridge over Mahakali River at Dharchula (India)- Dharchula (Nepal).

7. National Conference on E-Governance 2022 (Jan. 7, 2022)

The 24th National Conference on E- Governance 2022 was held at Hyderabad on 7 and 8 January 2022.

It was inaugurated by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh.

- The conference has been organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) and Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India, in association with the State Government of Telangana
- **The theme of this Conference is 'India's Techade: Digital Governance in a Post Pandemic World'.**

8. South Asian Consultation on Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (Jan. 7, 2022)

A two-day meeting of the South Asian Consultation Meeting on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework was held in New Delhi on 6-7 January 2022.

- The meeting was attended by the representatives from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan
- Afghanistan was not invited as no country in South Asia has recognised the Taliban government in Afghanistan.
- The meeting was inaugurated by the Union Minister for Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Shri Bhupender Yadav.

9. India's first Open Rock Museum inaugurated (Jan. 7, 2022)

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh inaugurated India's first unique "Rock" Museum on the campus of CSIR-National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI). Hyderabad .

- The Open Rock Museum displays around 35 different types of rocks from different parts of India with ages ranging from 3.3 Billion years to around 55 Million years of the Earth's history.
- These rocks also represent the deepest part of the earth up to 175 kms of distance from the surface of the earth.

10. Cheetah to be Introduced in India (Jan. 7, 2022)

An Action Plan regarding the introduction of Cheetah in India was released by the Union Minister for Environment and Forest Bhupendra Yadav .The action plan was released at the 19th Meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

- The Union Environment Minister announced that 50 Cheetahs will be introduced in the different National Parks in the country in a span of 5 years.
- The Cheetah, which is the fastest animal on land, was declared extinct in 1952 in India .
- **The African Cheetah from South Africa was expected to be reintroduced in Madhya Pradesh-based Kuno National Park in November 2021, but it was delayed due to the Corona pandemic.**