

# THE WAS BEING HINDU

# 13th JUNE, 2023

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## Wrestlers' protest and the shrinking space for dissent

ublic protests have long served as a catalyst for social and policy change in India, allowing individuals, classes and communities to voice their grievances and advocate for their rights. Over the past few years, protests have risen with bewildering rapidity. Protests had opened up space for a new era of social activism in the decade that the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government was in power. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government too has faced considerable opposition from a range of groups but has treated it very differently from previous governments.

#### From Nirbhaya to the present

In December 2012, people around the world watched as thousands took to the streets in the Central Vista of New Delhi following the brutal gang rape of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student (Nirbhaya). The protests became so intense and the public outrage was so great that the UPA government was compelled to address issues of sexual violence at the policy level, through the introduction of the new Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 to bring stricter punishments and broaden the scope of offences.

Fast forward to May 2023. Medal-winning wrestlers, who have brought honour to the country, have been on the streets for nearly four months to demand the arrest of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief and Kaiserganj Member of Parliament (MP), Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, of the BJP, who they have accused of sexually harassing women wrestlers and a minor. But the authorities did not respond for weeks. It took the Supreme Court of India's intervention for Delhi Police to file two first information reports (FIRs).

The wrestlers have held negotiations with the Home Minister and Sports Minister, but no agreement was reached on the key demand of arresting him. That the ruling party MP faces no political censure in the face of serious allegations recorded in FIRs, clearly indicates that the institutional system has failed these remarkably brave wrestlers fighting for justice in the face of tremendous state pressure.

But what about civil society and the public at large? The protest has found some support from civil society, especially organisations representing workers, farmers, women, students, and youth, but it is very small when compared to the public support for other protests under this regime or previous ones. There have been no rallies, no demonstrations or marches that defined protests against sexual violence in the UPA era. People have not been stirred by the images of wrestlers



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being dragged by the police. Despite the potential for mass mobilisation, these protests have failed to garner significant support from the middle classes and women's groups, which were in the forefront of the Nirbhaya protests in 2012.

Protests under the current regime are, no doubt, difficult as they are immediately branded as 'anti-national'. Also, activists might feel the futility of protests against a government that does not listen; but the fact is that this regime has been forced to respond to some protests even if it has done so for reasons of political expediency. The withdrawal of the controversial farm laws and the back-tracking over the contentious National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) are two recent examples where the government had to back down.

#### The context of class politics

The Indian won en's movement has had a long history of organising around sexual violence against women. They have in the past organised direct action on the streets. But this time, except for Left groups and the All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), women's groups have been largely missing in action, even though it is an issue of gender justice. But it is not just about gender justice; it is about the wider issues of dissent, dignity and social justice. Moreover, in the Nirbhava case, it was not only women who were mobilising but also a broader swathe of civil society that included men. The massive public mobilisation had virtually blocked the India Gate area for weeks, but this time, nothing of the kind has happened.

Wrestling is deeply ingrained in Indian culture and has a long history, particularly in the rural areas. However, traditional wrestling has not received the same level of attention and support as other sport in India, such as cricket. The protesting wrestlers mostly come from modest economic backgrounds; sports has helped them to achieve a measure of social and economic mobility. The lack of interest in this agitation must be seen in the broader context of class politics.

The active participation of the middle classes in the Anna Hazare Andolan (2011) and Nirbhaya protests presents a contrasting picture that highlights the importance given to social activism by this class. Their participation in the two movements catapulted them to the centre stage of the political discourse. The anti-corruption campaign was not averse to Hindutva politics; in fact, adopting its symbols and slogans added to its widening support. The urban middle class is also very well disposed to neo-liberalism; it has benefited from the opportunities available to it from the neo-liberal economy in the past three decades. Indeed, middle-class expansion has occurred since economic reforms through the private sector boom powered by economic liberalisation. This is the class that was enamoured by 'India Shining', and then shifted support to the then Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, before turning against him, as the UPA went on to introduce rights-based legislations and other broad-based social policies. Their shifting political loyalties, however, reflect an ideological consistency that characterises the middle class in its combined devotion to neo-liberalism and Hindutva. The middle-class opposition to the UPA played a crucial role in discrediting it; now, these very classes strongly back the current dispensation and see no reason to go against it, even on issues of sexual violence.

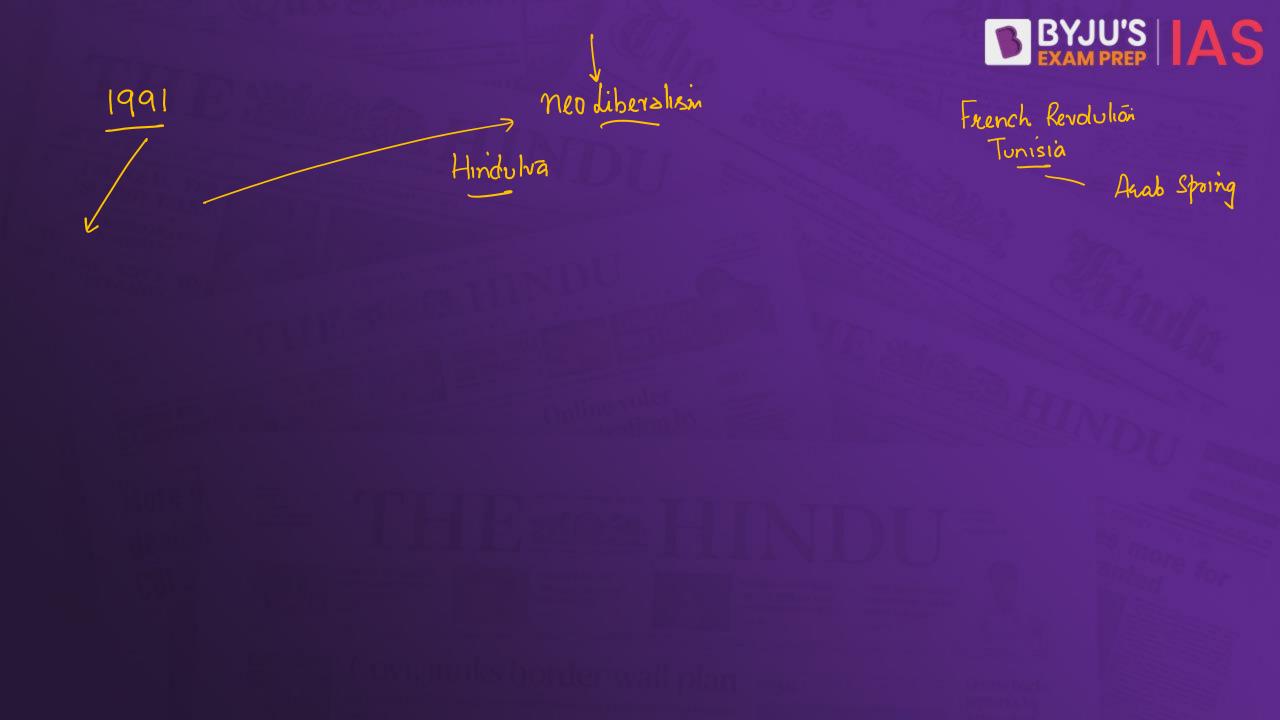
#### A form of polarisation

The support extended by *khap* panchayats underlines the complexities and challenges facing this protest. Their support highlights the social identity of the wrestlers but the identity issue could have been superseded had the wrestlers received greater support from civil society. Even so, this is not about caste politics but majoritarian politics that has encouraged a ready acceptance of 'law will take its own course' rhetoric, even when it is abundantly clear that the law does not take its own course when dealing with the powerful, unless they cannot and will not interfere with due process. Nonetheless, this rhetorical device facilitates an approval of the government's narrative, including police mistreatment of grapplers. This is yet another indication of polarisation being reinforced by majoritarian politics in the country today.

Middle-class activism tends to prioritise the issues and concerns that directly impact them, often overlooking the needs and struggles of the disadvantaged classes and communities. This self-focus can perpetuate inequalities and hinders efforts to address broader social issues. Failing to consider the intersections of class, caste, gender, and other factors can result in a narrow understanding of social reality and marginalised voices. In the event, there is a sense of suspicion towards mass politics and egalitarian ideas and movements.

This tendency contributes to an unprecedented quiescence among the middle classes and even among the oppressed classes. Above all, it means inadequate public pressure is exerted on the government to penalise an infamous history-sheeter. It is emblematic of society's normalisation of patriarchy and sexual harassment.

Dec. 2012 Consent - 18 years tarm daws -> CAA & NRC -> 2011 -> Indian against Corruption



# Same-sex marriage: Morality vs equality

ust a few days before the Supreme Court of India commenced hearings on the same-sex marriage issue, one of the world's leading philosophers, Michael Sandel, was in India to take part in a media group's conclave.

Introduced as a "rockstar" during the event and prodded to make comments on banal local politics, the significance of his ideas for deeper moral questions facing Indian society remained lost on most.

#### Supreme Court's neutrality

For example, while arguments based on the various strands of liberalism were being marshalled before the Supreme Court, Sandel's critique of contemporary liberalism should also have been part of the repertoire for consideration.

This critique highlights a difficulty in any attempt to sort out the issue of same-sex marriage within a liberal framework of individual rights.

For, if the Court were to adjudicate on the right to marry it would have to break its neutrality on moral questions about the desirability of marriage, what fits into the institution and what it means to people- a neutrality mandated by its jurisprudence on equal concern for all irrespective of social or personal morality.

In fact the idea of constitutional morality has been used by the Supreme Court in many cases to maintain neutrality on moral issues.

Following this neutrality would mean the Court should stop at ensuring that people's legal rights are protected just like how it held that those in live-in relationships are entitled to legal protection irrespective of the societies' moral view on such relationships.

view on such relationships. But to mandate the state to recognise a particular kind of marriage on the basis of equality is to recognise marriage as a social honour and pronounce on its moral worth. It would be violating the liberal tenet of neutrality. same-sex marriage should be left to citizens' initiatives to resolve, rather

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The question of

philosopher Martha Nussbaum, state intervention in the matter is only the second best option- "[S]o long as the state is in the marrying business, concerns with equality require it to offer marriage to same-sex couples-but... it would be a lot better, as a matter of both political theory and public policy, if the state withdrew from the marrying business" [emphasis

same-sex marriage like the

So even for an ardent votary of

added]. The idea that the state should be neutral to moral concerns about institutions like marriage is what Sandel calls "bracketing" of moral issues. It assumes human ability to detach oneself from his/ her "stories" or "social and historical roles and statuses."

#### Equality or privacy

In the context of same-sex marriages, the Court will be following this approach if it were to decide in favour of the petitioners only on the basis of equality or privacy. Sandel says "if...social and economic rights are required as a matter of equal respect for persons (only), the question remains why these persons...have a claim on my concern that others do not."

In other words, citizens who see and value marriage as a heterosexual institution would be asked to recognise same-sex marriages, through their state of course, not as a matter of shared understanding but as "a duty we owe to strangers."

On the other hand if the matter were to be decided on the basis of "intrinsic value or social importance of the practice", one avoids the alienation that gives rise to fundamentalist tendencies.

This now takes us to the more important question as to whether the Court, or for that matter even a centralised State, is capable of deciding on or resolving moral issues in society.

Sandel cites the example of Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's decision in *Goodridge v*. *Dept. of Public Health* (2003) which legalised same-sex marriage not just on grounds of equality and freedom of choice but by pronouncing on the virtues of marriage. In the American context, the Court only had to choose between whether marriage is about "procreation" or "loving relationships".

In India, the significance of marriage for those who look at it in traditional terms is much more than both. The significance was captured by the Calcutta High Court in 1901 as follows- "it is a 'union of flesh with flesh, bone with bone'... the union is a sacred tie and subsists even after the death..."

#### Citizens' initiatives

Yale Professor Helen Landemore says "compared to liberal court decisions imposed on a reluctant public, with the potential for backfiring... the most radical and ultimately sustainable changes to have come for gay rights... were forced on parties and electoral assemblies by ad hoc citizens' assemblies (Ireland) and the pressure of citizens' initiatives (Finland)" [emphasis added].

It has been noted by scholars that historically Indian society has not shared the same sense of disgust or hatred with which homosexuals were treated in other parts of the world.

Understandably, there were no social rumblings when homosexuality was decriminalised. It reflected the society's shared values. Can the same be said about homosexual marriage? Have we, like some western societies, accepted "romantic-love" or companionship and nothing else to be the basis of marriage?

Can the honorific value of marriage be sustained without a heterosexual couple? Ideally these questions should be left for citizens' assemblies or citizens' initiatives like in Ireland or Finland. In India too one could look for equivalents. Reviving Gandhi's "little republics" could be a good starting point.

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2012→ Kanshal Jndgment→ Navtej Johar (2018)

Constitutionà

moralily

# Will a hike in MSP help farmers?

What is the government claim on remunerative prices to growers? Will the increase in minimum support price encourage crop diversification? Why are farmers not satisfied and what do they propose instead?

#### EXPLAINER

#### Vikas Vasudeva

#### The story so far:

How does the MSP work? The MSP, which is a part of the

to procure farmers' produce during the season. It works as a tool to stabilise production and to control consumer

prices, vet farmers across the country have been facing problems of selling their

produce at the MSP. Delays in establishing

hands of commission agents, who most of the time buy the produce from farmers

procurement centres, exploitation at the

below the MSP, and a lack of awareness about the MSP among a large section of

farmers, are some of the challenges growers have been facing for years now. Against this background, farmers have

been demanding a 'legal status' to the MSP. The government, including the Centre and States, ought to come up with a system to set up an 'assured market mechanism,' point out farmers. The MSP has little meaning unless farmers'

produce is procured/purchased at the

ast week, the Centre announced the Minimum Support Price MSP) for this year's summer (kharif) season crops, hiking prices between 5-10% from last season. "to ensure remunerative prices to growers for their produce and to encourage crop diversification." A section of farmer representatives have expressed unhappiness over what they term as a 'meagre' hike in the MSP, defeating the government's intent of securing a "remunerative price". On the other hand, agriculture domain experts believe that an increase in the MSP may give a slight respite to growers, but argue that in the absence of any dependable or assured market mechanism of procurement-purchase for crops on the MSP in most parts of the country, the purpose of encouraging "crop diversification" gets defeated.

# A good bounty: Paddy bags stacked in an open paddy warehouse at Walajabad in Kanchipuram district on June 8. VELANKANNI RAJ. B government's agricultural price policy, is the price at which the government offers

#### THE GIST

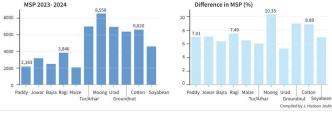
Last week, the Centre announced the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for this year's summer (kharif) seasor crops, hiking prices between 5-10% from last season, "to ensure remunerative prices to growers for their produce and to encourage crop diversification

#### Several farmers' outfits have expressed their discontentment over the latest MSP for the summer crops, terming it as insufficient.

Farming over the years, for the majority, especially small and marginal farmers, has not turned out to be remunerative A rise in their income could be the long-term answer to farmers' financial distress.

#### Benchmark rises

In the latest minimum support price (MSP) announced by the Centre, there has been a 5-10% hike in prices for kharif crops from the last season A look at the (MSP) for select kharif crops for marketing season 2023-24 and their difference from the last season



#### What is the government's announcement?

assured price.

according to the Swaminathan On June 7, the government announced the Commission recommendation of C2+50% MSP for 17 'kharif' crops, like paddy, pulses (moong, arhar, urad), oilseeds like groundnut and sovabean and cotton, for he adds The Bharatiya Kisan Union the marketing season of 2023-24. These were approved at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA). According to the government statement, the increase in MSP is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production, which aims at a reasonably fair remuneration for the farmers. Food Minister Piyush Goyal said the increase in MSP of kharif crops for this year is the highest compared to previous years.

#### Why are farmers worried? Several farmers' outfits have expressed

Party in 2014 that the MSP will be given

their discontentment over the latest MSP for the summer crops, terming it as insufficient. According to the All India Kisan Sabha, the declared MSP is "unfair, belies the hopes of the farmers and inflicts huge losses in their incomes." Rising input costs coupled with unfair MSP will push large sections of farmers, especially the small, marginal, and middle-level farmers, as well as tenants into indebtedness, says Ashok Dhawale president of AIKS. The longstanding promise made by the Bharatiya Janata

(C2 or comprehensive cost of production) "This is mainly because the farmers are remains an unfulfilled election promise, left at the mercy of market forces and the private players, Non-implementation of MSP and below-MSP-procurement of a (Ekta-Ugrahan), one of the largest farmer large number of crops, inter alia, has unions in Punjab and a member of the been one of the major hurdles in 'crop Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), the diversification' which is so vital for Indian umbrella body of around 500 farmer agriculture and in saving the outfits, has dismissed the MSP hike, environment. Ineffective implementation saving that the government's notion of of MSP and 'non-procurement' of all the ensuring 1.5 times the cost of production crops at the MSP is also one of the main on crops does not help in addressing the concerns of farmers. Such a scenario builds a strong rationale for giving 'legal farmers' plight as it does not provide remunerative price. "It's merely an status' to MSP as it is the floor or eyewash," says the outfit leader Sukhdev reference price. This does not imply that Singh Korikalan, as he adds that MSP the government should procure all those should be based on the Swaminathan crops but would certainly bind the private Commission's formula of C2+50%. "Also, players to procure those crops at least at the government needs to make MSP a the MSP. While facilitating

statutory right of the farmers. Farmers crop-diversification it would raise need to have an assurance that their crops farmers' income which is being will be purchased at the MSP to survive in propagated by the government," he says. the otherwise economically-unsustainable What about foodgrain stock? agricultural sector," he points out. As per third advance estimates for

#### What are agriculture experts saying? Noted economist Dr. Ranjit Singh country is estimated at a record 330.5 million tonnes which is higher by 14.9 million tonnes compared to 2021-22. This

Ghuman, currently a professor of eminence (Economics) at Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar, points out that is the highest increase in the last five the past track record shows that only three to four crops (mainly wheat, paddy and cotton and at times some pulses), were being procured at MSP while the

remaining crops were being procured at much below the MSP.

> Former professor at the Ludhiana-based Punjab Agricultural University, M.S. Sidhu, asserts that the delay in monsoon would impact cropping in non-irrigated regions of the country. "Around 51% area in the country is rain-fed, so if rains are delayed some impact is bound to be seen. But the country's foodgrains stocks are at a comfortable level, there's nothing to worry as of now," he adds.

The MSP attempts to strike a balance between the interest of growers and consumers. The government's price support policy attempts to provide a fair return to farmers while keeping in view the interest of consumers in a way that prices of food and other agricultural commodities are kept at a reasonable level. Farming over the years, for the majority, especially small and marginal farmers, has not turned out to be

tonnes of rice and 290.28 lakh tonnes of wheat.

remunerative. A rise in their income could be the long-term answer to farmers' financial distress. To ensure this rise in income, the government should focus on setting up an effective system to provide assured purchase and returns to farmers for all major crops at the MSP, as is done in the case of wheat and rice or extend

Compiled by J. Hudson Joshiya lakh tonnes comprising 265.06 lakh

What lies ahead?

### 2022-23, total foodgrain production in the

years, according to government data. The total stocks of rice and wheat held by Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State agencies as on May 1, 2023, was 555.34 subsidies on input costs.





# Kerala govt. comes under fire after strays maul disabled boy

#### The Hindu Bureau

KANNUR

The inquest report of Nihal Naushad, an 11-year-old disabled boy who was mauled to death by stray dogs near the Muzhappilangad Kitinakam mosque in Kannur on Sunday, suggests he was attacked by several dogs.

He sustained deep injuries on his neck, face, and behind his ear besides some on his left leg as well. His body was handed over to his relatives after a postmortem. The boy was laid to rest on Monday.

#### Stray dog menace

The incident has sparked State-wide condemnation with Opposition parties accusing the government of ignoring the growing stray dog menace in the State. Leader of Opposition in Kerala Assembly V. D. Satheesan said the animal birth



Opposition parties accused the government of ignoring the growing stray dog menace in the State. FILE PHOTO

control and anti-rabies vaccination drive in the State has stalled due to government apathy.

Social media also erupted in outrage, accusing the government of allowing the vaccination and sterilisation drive – launched with much fanfare in September as a "knee-jerk" reaction to a similar tragedy – to peter out slowly.

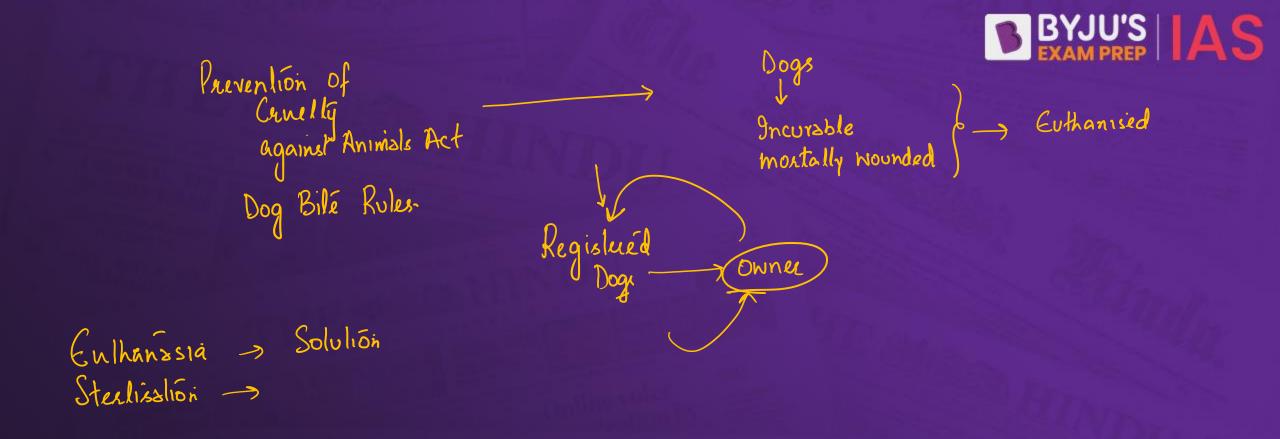
In an acerbic Facebook

post, Union Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan said strays tore up the child even as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan showcased Kerala as a model State to the expatriate Malayali community at Times Square in New York. "Luckily for him, there are no aggressive feral dogs at Times Square," he said.

In the government's defence, Minister for Local Self Government M.B. Rajesh said stray dog attacks had come down considerably following the animal birth control programme launched in September last year, but some local bodies have been lax in carrying out the operations.

Although a shortage of anti-rabies vaccines was reported last year, the Animal Husbandry Department on Monday said that it has enough stocks now.

BYJU'S AS Rabies Capilat of the World Steay Dog biles ------Cradicale rabies by 2030} COMMITMENT diveslock \$2019} -> 1.5 Cr Stray Dogs in India Census Dogs Wolves of Territorial ) animals best friend of humans



# China could have as many ICBMs as U.S. or Russia by turn of decade: think tank

#### Dinakar Peri NEW DELHI

China increased its nuclear arsenal to 410 warheads in January 2023 from 350 in January 2022, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said in its annual report on Monday.

"Depending on how it decides to structure its forces, China could potentially have at least as many intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as either the U.S. or Russia by the turn of the decade, the stockholmbased think tank said.

"China has started a significant expansion of its nuclear arsenal. It is increasingly difficult to square this trend with China's declared aim of having only the minimum nuclear forces needed to maintain its national security," Hans M. Kristensen, Associate Senior Fellow with SIPRI's Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme, said.

India and Pakistan also

#### Stockpile count

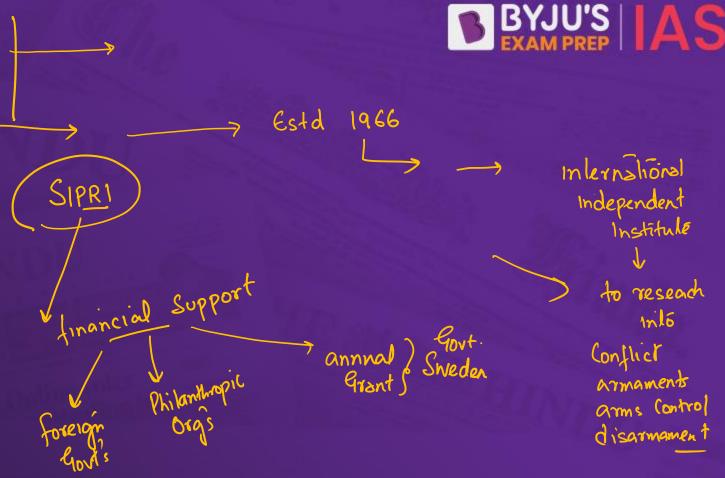
The nine nuclear-armed states—the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel— have deployed or stored 9,576 nuclear warheads

Country	Warhead stockpile		Country	Warhead stockpile	
	Deployed	Stored		Deployed	
U.S.	1,770	1,938	India	-	164
Russia	1,674	2,815	Pakistan	-	170
U.K.	120	105	North Korea	-	30
France	280	10	Israel	-	90
China	-	410		SOURCE: SIPRI	

expanded their nuclear arsenal. Both countries introduced and continued to develop new types of nuclear delivery system in 2022, the report noted. "While Pakistan remains the main focus of India's nuclear deterrent, India appears to be placing growing emphasis on longer-range weapons, including those capable of reaching targets across China." According to SIPRI esti-

According to SIPRI estimates, India's arsenal grew garding to 164 warheads in 2023 clined in from 160 in 2022 and that of Pakistan from 165 to 170. PRI said.

Of the total global inventory of 12, 512 warheads in January 2023, about 9,576 were in military stockpiles for potential use – 86 more than in January 2022. Russia and the U.S. together possessed almost 90% of all nuclear weapons. The size of their respective nuclear arsenal (useable warheads) seemed to have remained relatively stable in 2022, although transparency regarding nuclear forces declined in both countries in the wake of Ukraine war, SI-

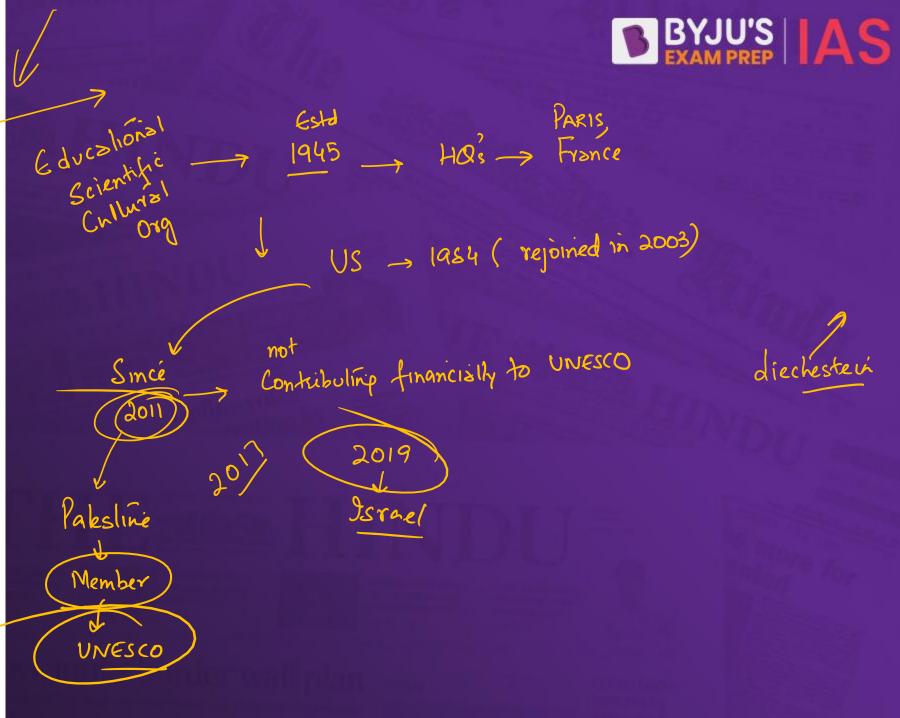


# U.S. decides to return to UNESCO's fold

# Associated Press

PARIS

The UN cultural and scientific agency UNESCO announced on Monday that the U.S. plans to rejoin – and pay more than \$600 million in back dues – after decade-long dispute а sparked by the organisation's move to include Palestine as a member. U.S. officials say the decision to return was motivated by concern that China is filling the gap left by the U.S. in UNESCO policymaking.



# CoWIN vaccination data out, govt. denies breach

Union IT Ministry says breached data were previously stolen but not from CoWIN portal; Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) set to investigate the issue and submit a report

#### <u>Bindu Shajan Perappadan</u> NEW DELHI

fter an alleged data leak of COVID vaccination beneficiaries, including several politicians, the Union Health Ministry on Monday said such reports were "without any basis and mischievous in nature". The Co-WIN portal was completely safe with adequate safeguards for data privacy, it maintained.

Among those whose personal details were allegedly leaked are CoWIN chairman Ram Sewak Sarma (ID submitted for vaccination), senior BJP leader Meenakshi Lekhi and Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal (location at which they got vaccinated), and Kerala Health Minister Veena George (the

### In safe hands?

The CoWIN portal, according to the Health Ministry, has adequate safeguards for data privacy

Vaccinated beneficiary data for CoWIN app is available at three levels, as below:

Beneficiary dashboard:
A vaccinated person can
have access data using
registered mobile number
with OTP authentication

• CoWIN authorised user: The vaccinator can access data of vaccinated beneficiaries using authentic login credentials, though CoWIN system logs every authorized access

mode of registration).

As per reports, the data breach is possible if the mobile number of a person is entered – details such as the identification number of the document submitted



 API based access: Third-party apps with authorised access of CoWIN APIs can access data of beneficiaries through beneficiary OTP authentication

(Aadhaar, passport, PAN and so forth), gender, date of birth, and the centre where the vaccine was administered, are provided as reply in an instant by the messenger bot in question. These details could be accessed even if the Aadhaar number was entered instead of the phone number. The passport numbers of those who had updated the CoWIN portal for travel abroad were also leaked.

#### 'CoWIN still safe'

Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics, and Information Technology, clarified that the data being accessed by the bot from a threat actor database seems to have been popuwith previously lated breached data. "It does not appear that CoWIN app or database has been directly breached," he tweeted, adding that the database was other than CoWIN.

#### **CONTINUED ON** » PAGE 12

AGENCY AGENCY Operational Since 2004 (IT Act) Computer Cyb.

dissemina

BYJU'S



Q1. The governments needs to work with animal welfare organizations to provide proper healthcare and housing to stray dogs. Comment. (150 Words)

Q2. Why do you think the protests by the wrestlers against sexual harassment has not evoked the same response from the civil society as in the previous instances? (250 Words)