

INDIA NON-COMMITTAL ON CURBS ON U.K. NGOS

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Role of NGOs, SHGs, Donors & Charities, and Institutional & other Stakeholders in Development Process

However, sources said the U.K. had not raised the issues “formally” or in writing yet. At the meeting, India expressed concern regarding “anti-India activities of certain extremists and radical elements in the U.K.” a statement by the MHA had said.

According to diplomatic sources, the delegation had also raised the denial of FCRA registration to UK-NGO Freedom Fund, which was one of 10 American, Australian, British and European NGOs dealing with environmental, climate change and child labour issues, which had lost their licences due to what the government called “adverse inputs” on their partnerships in India.

Oxfam India is one the country’s largest NGOs that works on food, clothing, shelter and medical projects. On January 1, 2022, the MHA issued a list of about 6,000 NGOs whose FCRA registration or licence to receive foreign funds had ceased to operate as the Ministry refused to renew their application or the NGOs did not apply for one. The MHA had not given specific reasons for the non-renewal of Oxfam India, Oxfam India Trust and others, but said the decision had been taken in “public interest”, without further details.

Protesting the MHA’s denial of its application on January 2, Oxfam India’s CEO Amit Behar had said it would “severely affect the ongoing humanitarian and social work in 16 States across the country” and would also affect the COVID response programme distributing medical equipment and support initiatives.

The non-renewal also meant that the NGO lost access to over Rs. 62 crore in its designated bank accounts, that came from international donors including Oxfam-UK (Rs. 7 crore), Oxfam-Australia (Rs. 3.1 crore), Oxfam-Germany (Rs. 2.8 crore), and Stichting Oxfam International-Netherlands (Rs. 7 crore).

Oxfam subsequently filed a review petition with the government on January 14, but while the MHA acknowledged receipt, it has not communicated any decision in the matter.

Significantly, Mr. Rycroft is understood to be well-versed with NGO funding issues as prior to being appointed Home Secretary, he was the Permanent Secretary at the Department for International Development (DfID), the British government’s aid arm, which was closed and merged with the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in September 2020.

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