

I-T SURVEY TEAM TOOK DATA BY CLONING SERVER: OXFAM INDIA

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Issues relating to Growth & Development - Public Finance, Taxation & Black Money incl. Government Budgeting

Two days after the income tax officials conducted a “survey” on Oxfam India on suspicion of financial irregularities, the non-profit organisation said that the survey team took all data by cloning its server and private mobile phones of senior leadership team. The department on Wednesday conducted surveys on two think tanks and a charity organisation on suspicion of irregularities related to financial transactions, including at Oxfam India’s office on the Okhla Industrial Estate.

“The Income-Tax (I-T) Department officials conducted an income tax ‘survey’ at the Oxfam India Delhi office from the 7th September 2022 noon to early hours of 9th September. During these 35-plus hours of non-stop survey, the Oxfam India team members were not allowed to leave the premises; the Internet was shut down and all the mobile phones were confiscated,” Oxfam India said in a statement.

It added that while the team conducting the survey was polite and professional, the process of a survey with such sweeping powers and broad ambit resulted in disappointing Oxfam India. “The Income Tax survey team took away hundreds of pages of data pertaining to finances and programs of Oxfam India. They also took all the data by cloning the Oxfam India server and the private mobile phones of the senior leadership team and the finance lead,” it added.

It further said that it is compliant with Indian laws and has filed all its statutory compliances, including Income tax and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) returns, in a timely manner since its inception.

“This Income Tax survey was undertaken without giving a reason. Oxfam India has cooperated with the Income Tax Department during this survey and is committed to doing so in the future. In January 2022, we also had a detailed week-long audit of the FCRA accounts by the auditors appointed by the FCRA division,” it said.

Stating that past eight months have been distressing for Oxfam India, the company pointed out that in December 2021, the renewal of FCRA licence was denied by the Home Ministry. “Despite this, Oxfam India was conducting one of the largest civil society responses to the COVID crisis across 16 States. Oxfam India has provided life-saving medical and diagnostic equipment to 150 district hospitals, 172 primary health centres, and 166 community health centres in 16 States. Ten oxygen plants have also been set up and made operational across the country,” it said.

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