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CENTRE TIGHTENS NORMS FOR FOREIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

» Funding check

- Under the fresh changes to Rules of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, all NGOs are required to disclose specific activities and geographical scope of their programmes to receive contributions under 5 permitted categories :

» Educational

- Schools, Colleges and libraries
- Scholarships
- Research institutions and think tanks
- Civic-awareness and constitutional-rights programmes

» Economic

- Livelihood generation
- Skill development
- Agricultural sectors
- Entrepreneurship and micro-enterprises
- Financial and digital inclusion

» Religious

- Places of worship
- Religious education
- Pilgrim services
- Meditation programmes
- Preservation of religious traditions

» Social

- Public health
- Rehabilitation
- Sanitation and nutrition
- Disaster relief

» Cultural

- Preservation of Indian arts and languages
- Museums, archives and cultural festivals
- Heritage conservation

REMAINS OF THE LIFESTYLE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE SANGAM PERIOD

- Traces of Sangam Age Life Traces of the lives of people from the Sangam Age were unearthed near Panruti in Cuddalore district.
- During an inspection of pits dug for brick kilns near the Malattaru River in the Varinjippakkam and Poondi areas, three ring wells were found, spaced about 100 meters apart. One of these was complete, consisting of eight layers, while the other two were in a damaged condition.
- Furthermore, we discovered terracotta earrings from the Sangam period, black and red pottery shards, pot spouts, inscribed pottery shards, terracotta vessels, and bricks.
- It has been revealed that the people of the Sangam Age used these ring wells for drinking water. Similar ring wells have been discovered previously in various parts of Tamil Nadu, including Keeladi, Poompuhar, Pattarai Perumbudur, Arikamedu, and Mamallapuram; in Villupuram district at Thirukovilur, Perangiyur, Gingee, and Thiruvamathur; and in Cuddalore district at Kandarakottai, Ulundampattu, Thalavanur, and Akkadavalli.

IS THE INDIA-US RELATIONSHIP FRAYING?

- The India-US relationship is a garment woven through years of hard work. Are its threads fraying now? US President Trump says no. During the G7 summit held on June 17, President Trump met Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines and told reporters that India and America are "very close." Is this the truth, or just flattery?
- » **A life separated across the sea**
 - Lives Lost at Sea In the second week of June (June 8–11), American missiles struck three cargo ships in the Gulf of Oman. These were not Indian ships; however, there were Indian sailors on board all three vessels.
 - In one of these ships, named 'Front Altair' (referred to as 'Cettabello' in the text), three Indian sailors lost their lives. The others were rescued. What was the crime committed by these ships? They were carrying Iranian fuel, which is under sanctions. Did international organizations like the UN impose these sanctions? No, it was the United States.
 - India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar conveyed to Rubio the Indian government's condemnation of the killing of our sailors. Rubio's response was issued as a press statement by the U.S. State Department on June 13: "All cargo vessels must comply with U.S. orders; transporting Iranian fuel in violation of U.S. sanctions is illegal, and the United States will not tolerate it."
- » **Rubio's Visit**
 - There was no sugar-coating in Rubio's response. It clearly favoured only the American position. However, his four-day visit to India during the last week of May was expected to help bridge the differences between the two sides.
 - During the visit, Rubio travelled to Kolkata, Agra and Jaipur. He did not miss any of the photo opportunities offered by these cities, which are rich in traditional heritage. He also participated in the grand celebration of the 250th anniversary of American democracy, held at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi with a concert by A.R. Rahman, followed by the meeting of the Quad, the four-nation grouping. There was no shortage of banquets either. All these events created an impression that the visit would help improve relations between the two countries.
- » **Agreement**
 - Rubio signed an agreement concerning rare minerals and elements required for products such as semiconductors, electric vehicles and defence technologies.

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- If the agreement is implemented, it could reduce China's dominance in this sector. This is significant. At the same time, did the visit help improve India-U.S. trade relations?
- » America's Strategy
 - The trade agreement proposed by the United States in February 2026 was subject to certain conditions. One of them was that India should increase its imports of American goods.
 - At present, the value of American goods imported by India is \$42 billion annually. The condition is that this should be increased to \$100 billion.
 - Rubio mentioned this as an achievement in his Delhi speech. This makes it clear that the United States is not willing to relax its trade conditions.
 - Visa issues for Indians living in the U.S. have increased. A new rule has been introduced stating that those seeking permanent residency (Green Card) must apply from their home countries. This significantly affects Indians.
 - Jaishankar appealed to Rubio regarding these restrictions. Rubio's response to this was evasive and did not favor the Indians. The Weakening Quadrilateral
 - Next is the 'Quad,' an abbreviation for the quadrilateral alliance between the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. These four countries are situated at different corners of the Indo-Pacific region. The stated purpose of the Quad is to enhance maritime surveillance and security in this region.
 - However, the real objective is no secret: it was to curb China's influence in the Asian arena. There has been a change in this now.
 - Rubio participated in the foreign ministers' meeting of this alliance held in Delhi on May 26. The joint statement released at the conclusion of the conference stated that their goal was to maintain peace and tranquility in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Two aspects that were missing from the report were glaringly obvious. First, on March 4, the U.S. used a submarine in the Indian Ocean to attack and sink the Iranian ship I.R.I.S. Dena, which was returning home after participating in a naval parade in Visakhapatnam at the invitation of India.
 - This is contrary not only to the fundamental principles of the Quad but also to international regulations.
 - Second, since 2021, the heads of the member nations were supposed to participate in the annual meetings of the Quad. This was followed until 2024. Leaders should have met in Delhi in 2025 and 2026, but they did not, because Trump did not come to Delhi; it is unknown when he will.
- » Will America Change?
 - We can infer the reason for this. For a long time, America has used India to counter China. However, Trump now desires to move toward a more conciliatory approach with China.
 - His recent trip to China points to exactly that. Henceforth, America's opposition to China will be curtailed. In this sense, India's assistance may no longer be necessary for America. The 'Quad' might end up becoming nothing more than a superficial gathering that meets and disperses without substance.
 - Rubio's visit in May created the appearance that America is growing closer to India. That was merely an appearance. In American policies regarding trade, immigration, foreign affairs, and maritime surveillance, one can see the threads between the two nations fraying further.
 - India must adapt itself to the changing environment. We must formulate alternative strategies to protect our sovereignty and commercial interests.