

## SSC Scam & Protests



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### SSC Scam & Protests

#### Introduction

Staff Selection Commission is a commission constituted under Government of India 1975 as Subordinate Services Selection Board under the Department of Personnel and Training of the central government, and re-designated as Staff Selection Commission in 1977, to recruit staff for various posts in the various Ministries and Departments of the Government of India and in Subordinate Offices. It conducts examinations to recruit non-gazetted staff for various central ministries and sub-ordinate departments. Every year, lakh of aspirants sit for multitude of exams held by the SSC in the hope of securing a stable government job. Some of the posts for which exams are conducted include lower division clerks, stenographers of the central secretariat stenographers' service and equivalent grades of Indian Foreign Service, central excise inspectors, income tax inspectors, and sub-inspectors in the CBI and central police organisations.

Combined Graduate Level Examination, often referred to as SSC CGL is one of the examinations held annually for selecting staff for various Group B and Group C<sup>1</sup> posts with pay scale of Rs 9,300 to 34,800 with a grade pay of Rs 42,000, successful candidates would qualify for, among other posts, Income-Tax and Excise inspectors. The examination consists of a Preliminary Examination followed by a main examination and conducted in three tiers – preliminary, mains and descriptive for the students to clear. Almost 40 lakhs people fill up the form and around 20 lakh take the exam every year.

#### SSC CGL Exam Leak: When and Why?

Like every year, SSC CGL 2017 examination began in August last year with Tier-I examination being held between August 5 to August 24, 2017 for 14 lakh aspirants and Tier-II scheduled to take place between February 17 and February 22 2018. During the exam phases, many reports came of remotely controlled online exams and chits found in toilets<sup>2</sup>.

#### Tier- I examination

- The students who attended the exams complained the shifts that were held before August 15 were comparatively difficult and moved the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT), but the case kept getting delayed thus, delaying the Tier- II exam.
- On October 31, the SSC announced the cut off as 131. After about a month and a half, the cut off were revised to 126.5, citing “technical glitch” and 40,000 more students who didn't clear before got a second opportunity, yet only 1.89 lakh had advanced to Tier-II for nearly 9,372 vacancies to be filled under Tier II exam that were later held between February 17 and February 22 2018.

#### Tier-II examination

- While the first shift of the exam were held in 206 centres without any incident in Delhi, SSC cancelled the second shift of the exam on February 17 at an exam centre called Animate Infotech while the newspapers reported that paper chits with answers were found in a toilet. In Bhopal also, the SSC had to cancel the exam after candidates found out that several questions were already marked with answers.

<sup>1</sup>Class III now called Group C posts in Ministries/Departments of the central government and in subordinate offices

<sup>2</sup><https://www.ndtv.com/jobs/ssc-cgl-tier-2-exam-2017-cancelled-at-delhi-centre-check-details-1814084>

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- According to the students, on February 21, two hours before the quantitative paper exam was to be held, the answer keys with questions were uploaded onto a Facebook page called SSCTube. The SSC again cited “technical glitch” and postponed the exam by two hours.
- Two days later, through on February 23, the page alleged that some students might have taken the test from remote locations to which the SSC denied any foul play in the examination. It also said that it had investigated the allegations of February 21 and found that the claims were “baseless”.
- As per the images posted on SSCTube Facebook post, exams were even conducted in private institutions, small cyber cafes, and centres without adequate security arrangements. These types of centres are not credible at all as soon after the exams various screenshots and photos of desktop/laptop screen with exam screen circulated. However, not even a pen is allowed inside the center but the online exams seemed to be remotely controlled by other persons on behalf of candidates.
- The next day, on February 24, SSCTube made another post on the alleged case of “remote access” of the exam held on February 18. That same day, the SSC released a notice saying that the exam held on February 21 was delayed due to “technical reasons” and will be re-conducted on March 9, 2017.

### The Mass Protest

The young aspirants who had been preparing the exam have decided to fight for their right to a fair and just selection system. Thousands of aspirants have been protesting in front of the office of Staff Selection Commission at CGO complex in Delhi since 27 February, demanding a CBI enquiry. The candidates raised questions as to how the screenshots of the question papers were available just after the exam as no one was allowed to take mobile phones or any other gadgets inside the exam halls. However on the other hand, the SSC Commission has refused to accept that the question papers were leaked. Rather Ashim Khurana, Chairman of the Commission, in a statement issued on 28 February, alleged that the protests were an outcome of instigation.

However, the demand was finally met on Sunday 4 March, when a group of candidates met the SSC chairman with BJP MP and the party’s Delhi unit chief Manoj Tiwari who had also arranged a meeting of the agitators’ representatives with Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh, where they raised their grievances and sought postponement the exam. On Monday, 5 March, the Centre ordered a CBI inquiry into the alleged scam. “We have accepted the demands of the protesting candidates and have given orders for CBI inquiry. Protests should now stop,” Home Minister Rajnath Singh said. This is not an isolated case of students expressing concerns over SSC examinations. The 10,661 students who had qualified the SSC CGL 2016 exam are yet to be given jobs and are raising their voices against the same. SSC CHSL (Combined Higher Secondary) 2015 qualified candidates are also waiting to be placed. The students had taken out protests last month. The Supreme Court has also agreed to hear on 12 March a plea seeking investigation into the alleged scam. Yet, even after the Centre ordered a CBI inquiry to look into the case, agitated candidates has vowed not to withdraw their movement until they receive a written assurance from the government. “The SSC has a history of changing its stance. So, we cannot trust their word until we are given a written assurance that a CBI enquiry would be conducted,” says Pradeep Kumar, an aspirant who has been protesting since the last few days. “On the one hand, for the last several years, almost all the government recruitment processes have been halted, jobs are being reduced drastically, and on the other such scams have become a norm whenever any recruitment exam happens,” said a protester.

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Apart from a CBI enquiry, the students claim that the government should also fulfil their long pending demand for normalisation in SSC exam. Last year, some applicants did approach the Central Administrative Tribunal for issuing directions to SSC to suspend all exams till a decision had been taken to include normalisation, but their appeal was dismissed on technical grounds. “We don’t understand the government’s resistance to normalisation of SSC exams. Is this government’s way of saying that only if we are lucky and we get an easier question that we will be selected, that merit is secondary to luck?” Sanjay Azad, another protestor asked. This is not an isolated case of students expressing concerns over SSC examinations. Job opportunities are still pending for the 10,661 students who had qualified the SSC CGL 2016 exam.

### It’s not limited to CGL Exams: Series of Exam Cancellations

The SSC Combined Higher Secondary Level (10+2) Examination, 2017 held every year to select candidates to the posts of Lower Divisional Clerk/ Junior Secretariat Assistant, Postal Assistant/ Sorting Assistant and Data Entry Operator scheduled for March 2018, recently was in the news for alleged leak of the examination paper followed by mass protests that led to cancellation of the second and third shifts at an examination centre in Patna. Later in the evening, a notice was issued by the office of Assistant Director of the central region of SSC declaring that the reason for cancelling the shifts was unavoidable<sup>3</sup>. Apart from paper leak, SSC CHSL (Combined Higher Secondary) 2015 qualified candidates are still waiting for their jobs.

Similarly, the SSC MTS 2017 paper-I (afternoon shift) too, that were to be held on the dates 30th April were cancelled by the department upon learning about the leak<sup>4</sup>. Later the Crime Branch of Delhi Police arrested Rambeer Dangi, the man who was involved in the paper leak. The accused was employed as a driver at the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in the fire department.

Incidents relating to irregularities in the conduct of exams held by state government and institutions have been recurring quite often in the past few years. States like Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Maharashtra and the latest Odisha), have seen incidents of question paper leakage in the past one year. One of the major effects of paper leakage apart from the of course financial losses and wastage of time (*due to paper leak* or cheating cases, the government has to re-conduct the exam) is the negative impact on the students’ state of mind as they feel cheated and in some cases might also lead to suicides.

### Aspiring for government jobs

Every year, more than 30 lakh candidates apply for only 8,000 vacancies under the SSC CGL exam. As for SSC MTS (Multi Tasking Staff Examination), more than 70 lakh candidates compete for the same number of vacancies. Despite such poor success ratio, the numbers of applications do not decrease. Government jobs are still the most preferred options for most Indians. A government job is coveted for various reasons such as permanence of position, salary, perks and some degree of power. Moreover looking at India’s current unemployment scenario marked by a massive shortfall in government jobs, coupled with rising unemployment, incidents such as exam paper leak only increases the burden on these students who are dependent on these exams to secure jobs. It is not surprising that attempts to derail the system have been met with huge protests as thousands of students spend time and money in coaching institutes hoping to secure a job that will guarantee them social mobility.. Based on the interviews of some of the aspirants, we can see that many students/protestors belong to poor social backgrounds who express their disappointment in such

<sup>3</sup><https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/patna/sscs-2-exam-cancelled-at-one-centre/articleshow/63207500.cms>

<sup>4</sup><http://www.livemint.com/Education/wt41wFS1kP3w5S6dXNSbnK/MTS-exam-paper-leaked-SSC-to-conduct-test-again-for-select.html>

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malpractices that continues to deprive the deserving and favours a few, their families too suffer the hardships . What's a more terrible thing: to dream of a clean system or to vote for a government that fools the young after coming some of the aspirants speaking to newspapers said:

*'I first did BCA and then MCA. I was being paid mere Rs 10,000 after doing MCA. I thought SSC would help me get a good government job. I have appeared for the test thrice. But every time, I fell short of a few points. Now we realise that we weren't falling short of anything, somebody else was being helped,said Karan , 29 Protestor*

*'My father is a farmer. He still managed to educate me and allowed me to pursue BTech. I came to Delhi after my graduation to pursue SSC. I always fell short of 1-2 points. We would have never taken to streets but we are furious. My family does not know I am protesting here, or they'll think I was the one who did not study well. They do not know that education does not matter here, money does'-Swapnil, 25 Protestor*

### The Way Forward

Question paper leakage has become a regular occurrence in public examinations during the past few years that place the credibility and quality of exams, and reliability of the results under a question mark. While the decision of the Centre for a CBI probe in the case is a step in the right direction, but the past track record pending cases with the CBI suggest that this matter may not see a resolution soon. Despite the fact that such incidents have been occurring frequently, there has been constant denial and concealment from the authorities concerned, who. Looking at the past SSC paper leak incidents, it is quite evident that there is a lack of government's seriousness in the matter that has encouraged repeated leakage of question papers of every other public examination. Therefore, in order to prevent such incidents the government needs to initiate a serious probe into the frequent incidence of question leakage and find out the causes of this problem. Those responsible for the wrongdoing must be caught and stern legal action must be applied against them. In addition, for ensuring the credibility of examinations and upgrading the quality of education, transparency is essential and at every level. Since the students who appear in such exams are also entitled to a fair examination systems in equal manner within the ambit of Art.21 and 14 of the constitution of India for which proper systems need to be in place to protect the fundamental rights of the students/ citizen of India, for free and fair selection and examination process.

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**Prepared by: Nancy D Cruz**

## Headlines

### **Seeking Loan Waiver, Higher MSP, Thousands of Farmers March Into Mumbai**

**(PTI, *The Wire*, March 11, 2018)**

35000 farmers and agricultural workers in Maharashtra walked for over 140 hours to Mumbai to protest and demand higher support prices land transfers and loan waivers. Marching under the banner of Left-affiliated All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), the protest drew the support of BJP ally Shiv Sena as well as the NCP. The march has been organised to protest the failures of the state BJP government on the farm front, including issues like farm loan waivers, remunerative prices for produce, non-implementation of the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission as well as the Forest Rights Act along with land acquisition by the government for projects like high speed rail.

Read more: <https://thewire.in/231521/seeking-loan-waiver-higher-msp-thousands-of-farmers-march-into-mumbai/>

Date accessed: 12.03.2018



## Governance and Development

### *POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE*

#### **For the Differently Aabled, India is Still Inaccessible**

(Aasheesh Sharma, *Hindustan Times*, March 06, 2018)

Approved by the Parliament in December, 2016, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill provided for imprisonment up to two years, along with a fine between Rs 10,000 and Rs 5 lakh, for discriminating against differently abled persons. It also increased the number of recognised disabilities from 7 to 21, including, for the first time, disability due to acid attacks and Parkinson's. However, more than a year after the passing of the Bill, the benefits haven't begun to affect people's lives. Barring Delhi, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, most states haven't framed the draft rights yet.

Read more: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/for-the-differently-abled-india-is-still-inaccessible/story-XZBDtPvjPIWk86YPVZDNSK.html>

Date accessed: 12.03.2018

### *DEVELOPMENT*

#### **Holes in accreditation of ITIs: Cycle stand is workshop, no building**

(Anil Sasi, *The Indian Express*, March 12, 2018)

A series of audits conducted by the Directorate General of Training (DGE&T) on accreditation granted to Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) have revealed that several of these institutes function without basic infrastructure and amenities. The audits discovered that till 2016, accreditation was granted to several privately run ITIs with questionable credentials while there was a spike in government's skilling efforts. ITIs operating out of make shift buildings and basements, multiple ITIs registering from the same address were few of the loopholes found. There were also instances of institutes not existing at the address provided on record, and several lacking requisite equipment. The House panel had pointed out that during the period 1950-2012, 6,624 ITIs were set up, but in the four years from 2012 to 2016, the QCI accredited 6,729 ITIs. But now the records of inspections point out that the quality and credibility of accreditation has been compromised and de affiliation notice has been issued to 14 ITIs.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/holes-in-accreditation-of-itis-cycle-stand-is-workshop-no-building-5094552/>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2018

#### **Tripartite commission to discuss factory closure norms**

(Vishwas Waghmode, *The Indian Express*, March 12, 2017)

In the light of strong opposition from labour unions against the proposed amendments to norms for factory closure in the Industrial Disputes Act, the Maharashtra government has set up a committee to address issues and complaints. The committee will be headed by the labour minister and will include five representatives for labour unions and companies. The proposed amendment, in an attempt to ease norms for factory owners, sought to increase the total number of workers in a factory from 100 to 300 for the factory owner to seek permission from government for closure implying that factories with lesser works could arbitrarily shut down. Among other issues, the government intends to ensure that labourers' rights, including rights of labourers on contractual basis are protected.

Read more: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/tripartite-commission-to-discuss-factory-closure-norms-5094880/>

Date Accessed: 12.03.2108

## Governance and Development

### GOVERNMENT

#### **3,045 Criminal Cases Involving 1,765 Lawmakers Pending In Country: Centre Tells SC, UP Tops List**

(Prabhati Nayak Mishra, *Live Law*, March 11, 2018)

The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that 3,045 criminal cases involving 1,765 MPs and MLAs are pending in various states across the country. According to an affidavit filed by the Union Law Ministry before the bench headed by Justice Ranjan Gogoi, Uttar Pradesh tops the list followed by Tamil Nadu and Bihar. There are 539 cases pending against 248 MPs and MLAs in UP, 324 cases pending against 178 MPs and MLAs in Tamil Nadu, 306 cases pending against 144 MPs and MLAs in Bihar, and 139 legislators are facing 303 cases in West Bengal. Eleven states have sent their reports to the Central government about their decision to set up special courts to try the cases involving MPs and MLAs.

Read more: <http://www.livelaw.in/3045-criminal-cases-involving-1765-lawmakers-pending-in-country-centre-tells-sc-up-tops-list/>

Date accessed: 12.03.2018

## Society

### GENDER

#### **Indian Women are Paid Less than Men but does Pay Parity Improve with Work Experience?**

(ET Bureau, *The Economic Times*, March 12, 2018)

According to a survey by Monster Salary Index (MSI) and Women of India Inc., the gender pay gap has narrowed from 24.8% in 2016 to 20% at present. However, there is still a long way to go for women at the workplace. The data suggests that the gender pay gap in India increases with work experience. While men with 0-2 years of experience, earned 7.8% higher median wages than women, this gap increased to 25% for those with experience of 11 or more years. According to the survey, some of the biggest challenges faced by women include inadequate travel and transport facilities (41%), attitude of clients, vendors, colleagues (33%) and societal perception of women who work for long hours (32%).

Read more: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/personal-finance-news/indian-women-are-paid-less-than-men-but-does-pay-parity-improve-with-work-experience/articleshow/63243143.cms>

Date accessed: 12.03.2018

#### **AIDWA Demands Govt to Implement Indian Maternity Benefit Act in Private Sector**

(TNN, *Times of India*, March 07, 2018)

All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) has demanded that the government enforces the Indian Maternity Benefit Act in the private sector. AIDWA claimed that while the government had amended the paid leave to 26 weeks, private companies, violating the law, were still only offering 12 weeks of paid leave. The other key demands of AIDWA include providing proper security to women working in different sectors, implementation of prevention of sexual harassment act strictly in work places and assuring minimum 250 days of work under NREGS to a family. Susan Kodi, president of AIDWA, said, "The Union government has not done anything in favour of women workers. Our demands also include passage of women's reservation bill. This Women's Day observance is to convey message of unity and solidarity to end crimes against women."

Read more: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/thiruvananthapuram/aidwa-demands-govt-to-implement-indian-maternity-benefit-act-in-private-sector/articleshow/63196682.cms>

Date accessed: 12.03.2018

## India and the World

### *INDIA IN THE WORLD*

#### **Indian, French Forces to Access Each Other's Naval Facilities in Indian Ocean**

*(The Wire, March 11, 2018)*

The recent Indo-French cooperation agreement on naval cooperation will enable and enhance Indian navy deployment in southern Indian Ocean apart from allowing the countries to set up military installations. Among the 14 agreements signed since President Macron's visit to India, defence ties are seen as the most crucial with the key defence agreement being for the "provision of reciprocal logistics support between their Armed Forces" which is similar to that signed by India and USA in 2006. Stability and increased access to the Indian Ocean is vital for both the countries and India's recent push in the Indian Ocean has been largely done to counter growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

Read more: <https://thewire.in/231531/india-and-france-sign-14-agreements-in-a-move-towards-maritime-cooperation/>

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Issue Coordinator: Nancy D Cruz



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