



DATE: 9 AUGUST 2026

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Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) (Source: The Hindu)

- The FCRA was passed in 1976 due to concerns that foreign governments were funding independent organizations to meddle in India's internal affairs.
- *The law aims to control foreign donations to organizations and people to ensure that they operate following the principles of a sovereign democratic republic.*
- *FCRA registrations are granted to individuals or associations with definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programs.*
- **The FCRA requires every person or NGO seeking to receive foreign donations to be:**
 - Registered under the Act,
 - To open a bank account for the receipt of foreign funds in the State Bank of India, Delhi,
 - To utilize those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received and as stipulated in the Act.
- **Exceptions**
 - Under the FCRA, applicants must be genuine and cannot engage in forced or incentivized religious conversions.
 - They must not have been charged or convicted of inciting communal conflict.
 - The Act also prohibits political parties, public officials, journalists, media organizations, judges, government employees, and politically affiliated groups from accepting foreign donations.
- **Previous Amendments**
 - The FCRA was revised in 2010 to "consolidate the law" on the use of foreign funds and "to prohibit" their use for "any activities detrimental to the national interest."
 - The 2020 amendment strengthened government oversight and control over how foreign donations to NGOs are received and used.
- **FCRA Amendment Rules 2026**
 - NGOs must specify exact objectives and operational areas, with separate fees for each activity category and State/UT.
 - Foreign funds can be used for worship, religious education, heritage preservation, and community kitchens, but cannot be used for religious conversion.
 - Associations having foreign nationals (other than Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)) as key functionaries will "ordinarily not be considered" for registration or prior permission to receive funds.
 - NGOs must utilize at least 75% of previous funds before receiving further installments and spend at least Rs 10 lakh on approved activities over two years for renewal eligibility.
 - Mandatory disclosure of the ultimate donor, official websites, social media accounts, and publications to strengthen accountability.

2 Jantar Mandir (Source: The Hindu)



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JANTAR MANTAR

The Astronomical Marvels of India

A collection of 19 architectural astronomical instruments built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.

HISTORY

- Built between 1724 and 1734 by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, the Rajput king of Amber (Jaipur).
- Jai Singh II was a great scholar of astronomy and mathematics.
- The observatories were constructed to compile accurate astronomical data and to prepare the "Zij-e-Muhammadi", an astronomical table.
- Five Jantar Mantars were built in India.

FIVE JANTAR MANTARS IN INDIA

- Jaipur (Rajasthan)
- Delhi (Delhi)
- Ujjain (Madhya Pradesh)
- Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)
- Mathura (Uttar Pradesh)

The Jaipur Jantar Mantar is the largest and best preserved.

PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE

- To observe celestial positions with the naked eye.
- To measure time, predict eclipses, track planetary movements and determine astrological calculations.
- Demonstrates the scientific temper and advanced knowledge of medieval India.
- A unique blend of science, architecture and traditional Indian knowledge systems.

MAJOR INSTRUMENTS

- SAMRAT YANTRA**
The world's largest stone sundial. It can measure time with an accuracy of about 2 seconds.
- JAI PRAKASH YANTRA**
Consists of two hemispherical structures used to measure the positions of celestial bodies.
- RAM YANTRA**
Measures the altitude and azimuth of celestial bodies.
- MISRA YANTRA**
A combination of five different instruments for various astronomical calculations.
- NADIVALAYA YANTRA**
Used to determine the time by the position of the sun.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

- Built using large stone and masonry without any mechanical devices.
- Instruments are fixed with great precision aligned with celestial coordinates.
- Combines geometric accuracy with aesthetic design.

QUICK FACTS

Built by	Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II
Period	1724 – 1734
Total Instruments	19
Material	Stone, limestone, marble, brass
UNESCO Status	Jaipur Jantar Mantar is a UNESCO World Heritage Site (2010).

DID YOU KNOW?

Jantar Mantar is an outstanding example of India's rich scientific heritage and the vision of Maharaja Jai Singh II, who saw astronomy as a means to understand the universe and serve humanity.

"These instruments are a testimony to India's ancient scientific brilliance and its timeless quest to measure the cosmos."

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3 Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) (Source: The Hindu)

Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) are primary cooperative banks located mainly in urban and semi-urban areas.

Features

- They provide credit and banking services to small traders, salaried persons, professionals, MSMEs and other local borrowers.
- Registered under the relevant State Cooperative Societies Act or the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002.
- Operate on cooperative principles such as mutual help, democratic decision-making and open membership.
- Provide banking services—deposits, loans, payments and other facilities—similar to commercial banks.
- Traditionally focused on small borrowers and middle- and lower-income groups.
- Their banking functions are regulated and supervised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

Four-Tier Regulation by RBI

Tier	Deposit Size
Tier 1	Up to ₹100 crore
Tier 2	Above ₹100 crore and up to ₹1,000 crore
Tier 3	Above ₹1,000 crore and up to ₹10,000 crore
Tier 4	Above ₹10,000 crore