

Ramon Magsaysay & his stance on Communism

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In news- In view of the anti-communist stance of Ramon Magsaysay, former Kerala health minister K K Shailaja has declined her nomination for the 2022 Ramon Magsaysay Award recently.

About Ramon Magsaysay-

- Ramon del Fierro Magsaysay Senior **was the seventh president of the Philippines**, from 1953 until his death in an air crash in 1957.
- **He was born on August 31, 1907** to a father who worked as a blacksmith and a mother who was a teacher.
- Magsaysay started out as an **automobile mechanic** before being **drafted into the Pacific War** (1941-1945), during World War II.
- The Pacific War would see the Japanese occupation of the Philippines – then a colony of the US for nearly four years.
- The US formally recognised the Philippines as an independent nation in 1946.
- As a **guerrilla leader resisting the Japanese occupation**, Magsaysay's bravery and leadership saw his appointment as a military governor.

Communism and Magsaysay-

- Founded in 1902, the Unión Obrera Democrática is considered the first modern trade federation in the Philippines.
- The **Communist Party of the Philippines or the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP)** was formed in 1930.
- The Hukbong Bayan Laban sa Hapon or **the People's Army Against the Japanese**, popularly known as the Hukbalahap

(Huk), was a prominent guerrilla outfit that fought the Japanese.

- As the country plunged into post-war chaos after 1946, the fortunes of the Hukbalahaps, too, changed dramatically.
- With the expansion of capitalism, the gap between the rich and poor widened and the farmers continued to languish.
- Huk leaders were viewed with suspicion over their declaration of commitment to communism and the demand for peasant rights.
- With the US as its close ally, the Philippine government cracked down on the Huks, who formed an alliance with the PKP to take their struggle to a parliamentary platform.
- The **severe crackdown against the Huks continued until Magsaysay became the National Defence Secretary** under President Elpidio Quirino.
- Magsaysay drew upon his own experience of guerrilla warfare to initiate **a two-pronged system of reforms and military campaigns.**
- It was under his administrative and military policies that the Huk threat was considered to be neutralised.
- As President, he was a close friend and supporter of the United States and a vocal spokesman against communism during the Cold War.
- He **led the foundation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, also known as the Manila Pact of 1954, that aimed to defeat communist-Marxist movements in Southeast Asia,** South Asia and the Southwestern Pacific.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award-

- **In 1957, the Ramon Magsaysay award was set up by trustees of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund** and the Philippine government to carry forward Magsaysay's legacy of service to the people, good governance, and

pragmatic idealism.

- It is regarded as the Asian version of the Nobel Prize.
- The Award recognises and honours individuals and organisations in Asia, regardless of race, creed, gender, or nationality, who have achieved distinction and have helped others generously without aiming for public recognition.
- In the six decades since 1958 the first year the Award was given out – over 300 organisations and individuals have been recognised for their developmental endeavours crucial to Asia, and, consequently, to the world.
- **The award is given out every year on August 31, on Magsaysay's birth anniversary.**

Indian winners on the list-

- Prominent Indians who have won the award include **Vinoba Bhave in 1958, Mother Teresa in 1962**, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay in 1966, Satyajit Ray in 1967, Mahasweta Devi in 1997.
- **In recent years, Arvind Kejriwal (2006)**, Anshu Gupta of Goonj (2015), human rights activist Bezwada Wilson (2016), and **journalist Ravish Kumar (2019)** have won the award.