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### **1. World Press Freedom Index : India slips to 150th position from 142nd ( May 4, 2022 )**

India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has fallen down to 150th position from last year's 142nd rank out of 180 countries.

#### **Highlights of the 2022 report**

- **Best performing countries**

1. Norway- 1st
2. Denmark- 2nd
3. Sweden- 3rd
4. Estonia- 4th
5. Finland- 5th

- **Worst performing countries**

- North Korea remained at the bottom of the list.
- Russia is placed at 155th position, slipping from 150th last year.
- According to the global media watchdog, China climbed two places to the 175th position, from 177th place last year.

- **Performance of India;s neighbourhood countries**

- Apart from India, the ranking of its neighbouring countries has also declined except Nepal.
- While Pakistan is ranked 157th, Sri Lanka is at 146th, Bangladesh at 162nd and Myanmar at 176th.

- **About Press Freedom Index**

- It has been published by Reporters Without Borders every year since 2002.
- This is based on the organisation's own assessment of countries' press freedom records in the last year.
- The index ranks 180 countries and territories according to the level of freedom available to journalists.
- The index is prepared on the basis of assessment of the level of pluralism, media freedom, media environment and self-censorship, legal framework, transparency as well as the quality of the existing infrastructure for news and information.

**2. Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurates NATGRID premises at Bengaluru ( May 4, 2022 )**

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) complex in Bengaluru which will help to prevent crimes and warn against any danger.

- He said the security requirements today have changed significantly as compared to the security challenges in the past in terms of data, scope and complexity.
- Therefore, legal and security agencies need automatic, secure and immediate access to information obtained from reliable sources.
- The Government has entrusted the task of developing and operating a state-of-the-art and innovative information technology platform for accessing information from the data collection organisations to NATGRID.
- The central government will soon develop a national database to monitor hawala transactions, terrorist funding, counterfeit currency, narcotics, bombing threats, illegal arms smuggling and other terror activities.
- C-DAC is implementing NATGRID in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a self-reliant India.
- **About National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)**
  - NATGRID is an intelligence sharing network that links data from standalone databases of various agencies and ministries of the Government of India.
  - It will also have access to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems, a database that links crime information, including first information reports, across 14,000 police stations in India.
  - NATGRID came into existence after the 2008 Mumbai attacks.
  - It links intelligence and investigation agencies and is exempted from the Right to Information Act, 2005.

**3. India and Germany ink agreement for cooperation in agro-ecology ( May 3, 2022 )**

India and Germany agreed to sign a Joint Declaration on Agro-Ecology and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Agriculture Sector.

- A declaration in this regard was signed by India's Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar and Germany's Economic Cooperation and Development Minister Svenja Schulz in a virtual meeting.
- Through this MoU, both the countries have agreed to promote joint research, knowledge sharing and innovation between academic institutions and agricultural people including farmers.

- Under this agreement, Germany will provide coordinated support to India for this initiative by supporting the agro-ecosystem transformation process through the Technical Cooperation Project.
- Under this initiative, Germany's Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development intends to provide 300 million euros by the year 2025 to provide financial and technical support to the projects.

- **About Germany**

- Germany is a country located in the continent of Europe.
- Capital - Berlin
- President- Frank Walter Steinmeier
- Currency - euro
- Chancellor- Olaf Schultz

#### **4. Harshada Sharad Garud first Indian to win gold medal at IWF Junior World Championships ( May 3, 2022 )**

In weightlifting, Harshada Sharad Garuda created history by becoming the first Indian to win a gold medal at the IWF Junior World Championships in Heraklion, Greece.

- She lifted 153 kg in the 45 kg weight category, including 70 kg in snatch and 83 kg in clean and jerk, and topped the podium.
- Garuda surpassed eight contestants as India won a medal on the first day of competition.
- Turkey's Bektas Kansu won the silver medal, while Teodora-Luminita Hinku of Moldova won the bronze.
- Another Indian in the same weight category, Anjali Patel, finished fifth with a total effort of 148kg, which included 67kg in snatch and 81kg in clean and jerk.
- Prior to Harshada, there are only two Indians to have won a medal at the IWF Junior World Championships.
- Mirabai Chanu won the bronze medal in 2013 and Achinta Shuli won the silver medal last year.

#### **5. Maharashtra Cabinet approved the country's first-of-its-kind gene bank programme in the State ( May 2, 2022 )**

Maharashtra government has announced to set up a 'Gene Bank Project' for the conservation of native and endangered animals, crops, marine and biological species.

- The project will be executed by the Maharashtra State Biodiversity Board (MSBB).
- The Maharashtra Gene Bank project will help in the conservation of biodiversity across the state and ensure their availability for generations to come.

- The project will focus on mitigating the impact on the food chain due to climate change.
- Rs 172.39 crore has been allocated for this project for the next five years.
- **The 'Maharashtra Gene Bank Project' will work on seven themes**

1. Marine Biodiversity
2. Variety of Local Crop/Seed
3. Indigenous Cattle Breeds
4. Biodiversity of Pure Water
5. Grasslands, scrub and animal grazing lands Biodiversity.
6. Conservation and Management Plan for Areas Under Forest Rights
7. Rejuvenation of Forest Areas

## **6. IRS officer Sangeeta Singh given additional charge of CBDT chairman ( May 2, 2022 )**

Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer Sangeeta Singh has been given the additional charge of chairperson of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) after CBDT chief JB Mohapatra retired on April 30.

- Sangeeta Singh was given the additional charge of Chairperson of CBDT for a period of three months or till the appointment of regular Chairman.
- Sangeeta Singh is a 1986 batch IRS officer of Income Tax Cadre.
- Sangeeta Singh is presently Member (Income Tax & Revenue) in CBDT. In addition he also holds the additional charge of Member (Taxpayer Services) in CBDT.

### **• About Central Board of Direct Taxes -**

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes is a part of the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance.
- All matters relating to direct taxes in India were handed over to the Central Board of Direct Taxes with effect from 1 January 1964.
- CBDT provides essential information for policies and schemes of Direct Taxes in India.
- The CBDT consists of six members. The Chairman and other members of the CBDT are selected from the Indian Revenue Service and the premier civil service of India.

## **7. Bihar CM inaugurates India's first ethanol plant in Purnia ( May 2, 2022 )**

The country's first ethanol plant operated from coarse grains was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar on 30 April 2022 in Purnia district of Bihar.

- This is the first plant set up after the Central Government approved the Ethanol Production and Promotion Policy-2021 of the Government of Bihar.
- Ethanol will be manufactured from maize and broken rice in the plant, which will benefit more than 10000 farmers of Bihar in the coming time.
- The production capacity of the Greenfield Grain Based Ethanol Plant is 65 thousand litres per day.
- The plant has been designed keeping in mind the environment friendly so as to ensure zero liquid discharge and cause less damage to the environment.
- This plant has been set up at a cost of one hundred and five crores.
- Production of ethanol will reduce the cost of petrol in the state and create new employment opportunities.
- **About ethanol-**
- Ethanol is a kind of alcohol, it is also called ethyl alcohol.
- It can be used as fuel in vehicles by mixing it with petrol.
- After sugarcane, the central government is now focusing on preparing ethanol from rice.
- By producing ethanol, farmers can make their economic condition better by earning good profits.
- Ethanol is mainly produced from the sugarcane crop, but it can also be prepared from different types of sugar crops.

## **8. PM participates in unveiling of Sardar Patel's statue in Canada ( May 2, 2022 )**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended a ceremony in Markham, Canada on May 1, where a statue of Sardar Patel was unveiled at the Sanatan Mandir Cultural Centre.

- PM Modi lauded the unveiling of the statue as a great initiative by the diaspora to deepen cultural ties with India.
- He said that the statue of Sardar Patel would not only strengthen the cultural values but would also become a symbol of relations between the two countries.
- He said, India is not only a nation, but also an idea and culture.
- He said that India is that high level idea which talks of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.
- **India-Canada relation**
- India-Canada bilateral relationship is based on the shared values of democracy, pluralism, and extended economic engagement.
- Relations between the two countries are based on shared democratic values, the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the two societies, and people-to-people ties.

- The visit of the Prime Minister of India to Canada in 2015 has transformed the bilateral relationship into a strategic partnership.
  - Both the countries pursue bilateral relations through the following dialogue mechanisms-
1. Joint Working Group on Higher Education(Since 2019)
  2. Ministerial Level – Strategic, Trade and Energy Dialogue
  3. Other sector specific joint working groups
  4. Joint Committee Meeting on Civil Nuclear cooperation
  5. India-Canada Strategic Dialogue by the External Affairs Ministers of both nations
- Bilateral trade between India and Canada is worth US\$ 5 billion.
  - More than 400 Canadian companies have a presence in India, and over 1,000 companies are actively trading in the Indian market.
  - India exports pharma, iron and steel, chemicals, gems and jewellery, nuclear reactors and boilers to Canada.
  - Imports include minerals, ores, vegetables, fertiliser, paper and pulp.

## **9. Biggest bilateral trade pact between India, UAE comes into force ( May 2, 2022 )**

The historic India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) which was signed between the two countries on 18 February 2022, officially came into force from 1 May.

- Under the agreement, domestic exporters of products of textiles, agriculture, dry fruits, gems and jewellery will get duty-free access to the UAE market.
- In a symbolic start to the implementation of the agreement, Commerce Secretary BVR Subramaniam handed over the place of origin certificates to three exporters from the gems and jewellery sector.
- Under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), these consignments sent to Dubai will not attract customs duty.

### **• Background**

- CEPA, a comprehensive path-breaking trade agreement between India and the United Arab Emirates, was signed on February 18 during a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- The agreement was signed and exchanged by Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and UAE Minister of Economy Abdullah bin Touq Al Marri.

### **• Significance of the agreement**

- The agreement will provide significant benefits to Indian and UAE businesses, including increased market access and lower tariffs.
- Through CEPA, the target is to increase bilateral trade from the current \$60 billion to \$100 billion in the next five years.
- Overall, India will benefit from the preferential market access provided by the UAE on over 97% of its tariff lines.

## **10. FDA proposes ban on menthol cigarettes, flavoured cigars ( April 30, 2022 )**

The US Food and Drug Administration issued a long-awaited proposal to ban menthol cigarettes and flavoured cigars.

- The proposal aims to ban menthol as a specific flavouring in cigarettes and all characteristic flavours in cigars.
- The proposed rule will help prevent children from becoming the next generation of smokers and help in quitting adult smoking addiction.
- The proposed rule will help prevent children from becoming the next generation of smokers and help in quitting adult smoking addiction.
- Brazil was the first country in the world to ban menthol cigarettes in 2012.
- In 2019, the Government of India banned electronic cigarettes and different states have their own rules for banning the consumption of hookah in public places.

### **• Tobacco Consumption in India**

- As per the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, India has the second largest number (268 million) of tobacco users in the world.
- Every year 1.3 million people in India die due to tobacco-related diseases.
- One million deaths are caused by smoking.
- In India, about 270 million people above 15 years of age and 8.5% of school children in the age group of 13-15 years use tobacco in some form or the other.
- Tobacco consumption incurs an economic burden of Rs 1,77,340 crore annually in India.
- About 27 percent of cancers in India are caused by tobacco use.