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Colombo Security Conference

- Recently, the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) was organized virtual by the National Investigation Agency of India.
- Participants discussed various challenges related to terrorism in their respective countries and shared their experiences in prosecuting terrorism cases, strategies to deal with foreign fighters and countering the misuse of internet and social media.

Colombo Security Conference (CSC):

- The CSC was formed in the year 2011 as a trilateral Maritime Security Group consisting of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.
- In this, Mauritius was included as the fourth member in the fifth meeting of the National Security Advisors.
- Bangladesh and Seychelles participated as observers and were invited to join the group.
- Envisioned Goals: The fifth meeting of the National Security Advisors of the CSC identified key areas of cooperation to enhance and strengthen regional security in the **following five pillars**:
 - Security and Maritime Security
 - Combating terrorism and extremism
 - Combating trafficking and international organized crime
 - Cyber security, security of critical infrastructure and technology
 - Humanitarian aid and disaster relief

Importance:

- The CSC is seen as India's access to the Indian Ocean to underline regional cooperation and shared security objectives.
- **Countering China:** The CSC hopes to restrict China's influence in areas of strategic importance and reduce China's presence in member states.
- **Maritime Security:** India has a large coastline of about 7500 km along with strategic chokepoint islands. Maritime security is a priority for the country, in which the CSC plays an important role.
- **Synergy with Sagar Vision:** The grouping is in line with India's vision of "Sagar: Security and Growth for All in the Regions" and being a member of the India Quad Grouping.
- **Emerging Sub-regionalism:** The coming together of the 6 Indian Ocean Region countries on a common maritime and security platform indicates the development of sub-regionalism and also plays an important role in the wider global context.
- **Associated Challenge:** Even though the strategic interests of the six countries are aligned in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) must fulfill the effort to mold CSC into an institution to counter China's influence.

National Investigation Agency

- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is a federal investigative agency set up by the Government of India to combat terrorism in India. It acts as the central counter-terrorism law enforcement agency.
- The agency came into existence with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Bill, 2008, an Act passed by the Parliament of India on 31 December 2008.
- The National Investigation Agency was set up after the 2008 Mumbai attacks, as the need for a central agency to counter terrorism was felt after this incident.

Timor Leste

- Recently, East Timor (Timor Leste), also known as Asia's newest democracy, concluded the second and final round of presidential elections.

Key points about East Timor:

History:

- The region was colonized by Portugal in the 18th century and remained under Portuguese control until 1975.
- When the Portuguese withdrew from the region, it was invaded by Indonesia and established East Timor as its 27th province.
- There was a long and bloody struggle for the independence of East Timor, in which at least 100,000 people died.
- In 1999, East Timorese voted for independence in a UN-supervised referendum, but this encouraged violent activities until peacekeeping forces were allowed to enter the region.
- The country was officially recognized by the United Nations in the year 2002.
- East Timor has also applied to become a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- At present it has observer status.

Geographical situation:

- East Timor is bordered by the Timor Sea to the southeast, the Wetar Strait to the north, the Ombai Strait to the northwest, and West Timor (part of the Indonesian province of East Nusa Tenggara) to the southwest.
- East Timor includes the eastern part of the island of Timor, the western half of which is part of Indonesia.
- It covers a land area of 15,000 square km, slightly smaller than Israel and its 1.3 million people are predominantly Roman Catholic.

About economy and political system:

Politics:

- In the nearly 20 years since independence, East Timor's presidential and parliamentary elections have been dominated by many people alike.
- In its political system, the President also shares some executive powers and appoints the government and has the power to veto ministers or dissolve Parliament.

Economy:

- The country depends on the revenue from its offshore oil and gas reserves which account for 90% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- It has an agreement with Australia for the Greater Sunrise Gas Field, which is estimated to be valued at US\$65 billion.
- The Bayu Undan gas field, its main revenue field, is on the verge of drying up by the year 2023 and the country is now planning to collaborate with companies in Australia to convert it into carbon capture facilities.

Cases Pending in Supreme Court

- Many sitting judges of the Supreme Court are retiring in the year 2022, as a result of which many posts in the top court will become vacant this year.

Related concerns:

- These retirements in the Supreme Court are taking place at a time when the court is in the process of stabilizing itself, especially after the brutal waves of the pandemic, with a large number of cases pending in the court.
- India's legal system has the 'largest pending case backlog' in the world – about 30 million cases pending.
- This number continues to grow, reflecting the flaws in its own legal system.
- And because of this backlog, most of the prisoners in India's prisons are undertrials awaiting trial.

Cases pending in Supreme Court:

- As per Supreme Court data, 70,362 cases are pending in the apex court as of April 1, 2022.

- More than 19% of these cases are not ready to appear before a court bench for 'judicial hearing' as the required preliminary process has not been completed.
- 52,110 cases are still at the entry stage, while 18,522 cases are related to regular hearing.
- The total number of cases (main and allied matters) before the Constitution Bench is 422.
- The Supreme Court has recently resumed 'full physical hearing', after two years of 'virtual system'.

Various steps taken by the government to reduce the pendency of cases:

- The "National Litigation Policy 2010" has been implemented to turn the government into an efficient and responsible 'litigant'.
- According to the 'National Litigation Policy' 2010, 'State Litigation Policies' have been prepared by all the states.
- The 'Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS)' was formulated in 2015 with the objective of keeping track of the cases in which the government is a party.
- The Supreme Court has advised the Central Government that the social service duties should be allotted to criminals sentenced to imprisonment for 6 months or one year, instead of sending them to burden the already overcrowded jails.

Demand on Time:

- Revise the National Litigation Policy.
- 'Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism' should be promoted to encourage arbitration.
- Coordinated action should be taken between the government and the judiciary.
- The judicial capacity in the lower courts should be strengthened to reduce the burden on the higher courts.
- Expenditure on the judiciary should be increased.
- Court case management and court automation system should be improved.
- Constitution of subject-specific 'Pethas'.
- Strong internal dispute resolution mechanism.
- Judges should write shorter and more precise decisions.

Swadeep Kumar

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