YOJNA IAS

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

2022

Uniform civil code

- The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has once again taken strong objection to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), calling it unconstitutional, anti-minority and unacceptable to Muslims.

- AIMPLB has also emphasized that the issue of 'Uniform Civil Code' (UCC) is being raised to divert attention from the real issues and promote the agenda of hatred and discrimination.

What is 'uniform civil code'?

- Uniform Civil Code is a comprehensive set of government laws designed for all citizens in a secular manner, ie regardless of religion.

Related Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 44 of the Constitution states that there should be a 'uniform civil code' (UCC) in the country.
- According to this article, 'The State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a 'uniform civil code' throughout the territory of India.' Since the 'Directive Principles of Policy' are only guidelines in nature, they are applicable to the States. Compliance is not mandatory.

A 'uniform civil code' is needed in India for the following reasons:

- A secular republic requires a 'uniform law' for all citizens, rather than differentiated rules based on religious practices.
- 'Gender justice': Women's rights are generally limited under religious laws, whether Hindu or Muslim. Many practices prevalent under religious traditions go against the 'guarantees of fundamental rights' enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
- Courts have also, often in their judgments, including the one in the Shah Bano case, said that the government should move towards implementing a 'uniform civil code'.

Doesn't India already have a 'uniform code' in civil matters?

- Article 44 of the Constitution states that there should be a 'uniform civil code' (UCC) in the country.
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Why is a 'uniform civil code' (UCC) not desirable at this time?

- Secularism cannot be against the plurality/diversity prevailing in the country.
- Cultural diversity cannot be jeopardized to such an extent that our insistence on 'uniformity' itself becomes a threat to the territorial integrity of the nation.

Constitutional Disruption:

- Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which seeks to protect the freedom to profess and propagate any religion, conflicts with the concepts of equality enshrined under Article 14 of the Indian Constitution.

Swadeep Kumar

Laser Communications Relay Demonstration: NASA

Laser Communications Relay

Demonstration – Today Current Affairs

- Recently, the US space agency 'NASA' (NASA) demonstrated its new communication system 'Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD). This communication system was launched in December 2021.
- It is the agency's first 'laser communications system'.
- LCRD will help the agency to test optical communications in space.

Today Current Affairs

About LCRD

- The 'Laser Communications Relay Demonstration (LCRD)' is a demonstration of the 'technology' that will pave the way for future optical communications missions.
- The LCRD instruments have been installed on the Space Test Program Satellite 6: STPSat-6 of the US Department of Defense.
- For this, it will be installed in a 'Geosynchronous Orbit' at an altitude of 35,000 km from the Earth.

Advantages of optical communication systems : The Hindu Analysis

- Optical communication systems are smaller in size and less in weight and require less energy than radio equipment.
- Being 'smaller' means more room for science instruments.
- Less load means less launch expense.
- Less power means less use of spacecraft batteries.
- Missions in the future will be equipped with unparalleled communication capabilities, with 'optical communication' complementing the 'radio' system

Laser System Vs Radio System : The Hindu Analysis

- Laser communication and radio waves use different wavelengths of light.
- Infrared light is used in laser and its wavelength is shorter as compared to radio waves. This will help in transferring more data in less time.

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BrahMos: Anti-Ship Version

- Recently, an anti-ship version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile has been successfully test-fired jointly by the Indian Navy and the Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Andaman and Nicobar Command is the only tri-service command of the Indian Armed

Forces.

About BrahMos:

- BrahMos is a joint venture between the Defense Research and Development Organization and NPOM of Russia.
- It is named after the Brahmaputra river of India and the Moskva river of Russia.
- It is a two-stage (solid propellant engine in the first stage and liquid ramjet in the second) missile.
- It is a multiplatform missile which can be launched with precision from land, air and sea missile capability which can operate both day and night in spite of bad weather.
- It works on the principle of "fire and forget", that is, it does not require guidance after launch.
- BrahMos is one of the fastest cruise missiles currently deployed actively with a speed of Mach 2.8 (about 3 times the speed of sound).
- Earlier, the Indian Air Force successfully test-fired the BrahMos missile from a Sukhoi fighter jet.
- Recently the Indian Navy also successfully test-fired an improved version of the BrahMos missile from a stealth destroyer in the Indian Ocean.
- After India's joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) club in June 2016, the missile's range was increased to 450 km in a later stage and plans expand to 600 kms.

Defense equipment purchased by India from Russia:

- Submarines: Six Air Independent Propulsion-AIP-powered conventional submarines under the P75-I Project.
- Negotiations are underway for India to lease two nuclear ballistic submarines.
- Frigates and Guided-Missile Destroyers: Four of the Navy's 10 guided-missile destroyers are of the Russian Kashin class and six of its 17 warships are of the Russian Talwar class.
- Aircraft Carrier: INS Vikramaditya, the only aircraft carrier in India's service, is a Soviet-built Kyiv-class ship that was inducted into the Indian Navy in 2013.
- Fighter aircraft: Russia has also been one of the main exporters of fighter jets to India, including hundreds of Sukhoi and MiG jets.
- All six air tanks in service are Russian-made IL-78s.
- Tanks: The major battle tank force of the Indian Army is mainly composed of Russian T-72M1 (66%) and T-90S (30%).
- Missile Defense System: S- 400 Anti-Missile System.

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Indonesia bans palm oil exports

- Recently Indonesia, which is the world's largest palm oil producer, exporter and consumer country, has announced that it will reduce the domestic shortage of cooking oil and its rising prices for the commodity and its products. Ban on all exports of raw materials.
- India imports half of its annual palm oil requirement, ie 8.3 million tonnes, from Indonesia. Thus, the export ban imposed by Indonesia will affect the interests of India.

Palm oil and its uses:

- Palm oil is an edible vegetable oil obtained from the mesocarp (red pulp) of the Fruit of the Oil Palms.
- It is used in everything from cooking, cosmetics, processed foods, cakes, chocolate, spreads, soap, shampoo and cleaning products to biofuels.
- The use of crude palm oil to make biodiesel has been termed as 'Green Diesel'.
- Indonesia and Malaysia together produce about 90% of the global palm oil, with Indonesia also having a large share which produced 45 million tonnes of palm oil in the year 2021.
- The palm oil industry has come under criticism because of its continued production leading to increased deforestation, as well as to colonial-era conditions due to exploitative labor methods.
- Although palm oil is also preferred because it is cheap; Palm oil has a higher production per hectare than some other vegetable oil plants such as soybeans.

Importance of Palm Oil for Global Supply Chains:

- According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), with global production of palm oil exceeding 73 million tonnes (MT) in 2020, it is the most widely used vegetable oil in the world.
- Its production is estimated to be 77 MT in the current financial year 2022-23.
- According to Reuters, palm oil accounts for 40% of the global supply of the four most widely used edible oils (palm, soybean, rapeseed (canola) and sunflower oil).
- Globally 60% of palm oil is supplied by Indonesia.

Reasons for the rise in the prices of edible oils:

- India is the largest importer of palm oil. Palm oil prices have risen this year due to increased demand due to short supply of alternative vegetable oils.
- Soybean, which is the second largest producer of oil, is also likely to be affected this year as the weather is not favorable for soybean production in Argentina, its major producer.
- Canola oil production was affected by drought in Canada last year, and supplies of sunflower oil, which is 80-90% produced by Russia and Ukraine, have been hit hard by the ongoing conflict.
- Global food oil prices have risen sharply since late last year due to pandemic-induced labor shortages and global food inflation linked to the pandemic and the Ukraine crisis.

Impact on India:

- India is the largest importer of palm oil, accounting for 40% of its vegetable oil consumption.
- India imports half of its annual requirement (8.3 metric tonnes) of palm oil from Indonesia.
- This will increase the number of people who are already battling record-high wholesale inflation.
- It is significant that last year the Center launched the National Mission on Edible Oil – Palm Oil to boost India's domestic palm oil production

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Zero Defect Zero Effect: MSME

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has launched the MSME Sustainable (ZED- Zero Defect Zero Effect) certification scheme.

About the plan:

- This scheme motivates and encourages MSMEs to become MSME champions by enabling and facilitating them to adopt ZED methods and ZED certification.
- MSME Sustainable (ZED) certification can be achieved in three levels after taking the ZED Pledge and registering:
  - Certification Level 1: Bronze
  - Certification Level 2: Silver
  - Certification Level 3: Gold
- MSME can apply for any certification level after taking the ZED Pledge if it feels that it fulfills the required conditions in each level.
- Taking the ZED Pledge means that MSMEs have to take a "pre-commitment" to follow the values of Zero Effect, Zero Defect and move ahead in the path of ZED.

Subsidy:

- Under the scheme, MSMEs will get subsidy on the cost of ZED certification as per the following structure:
  - Micro Enterprises: 80%
  - Small Enterprises: 60%
  - Medium Enterprises: 50%
- Rs 5 lakh (per MSME) will be provided for handholding and consultancy support to MSMEs under ZED certification to help them move towards zero defect zero effect solution.
- MSMEs can also take advantage of various other incentives offered by States and UTs, financial institutions etc. for ZED certification and MSMEs can also apply for free ZED certification under Kavach (COVID-19 MADAD) initiative

Components of the plan:

- Industry Awareness Program/Workshop.
- Training Program.
- Evaluation and Certification.
- Hand holding.
- Benefits/Incentives.
- PR campaigns, advertising and brand promotion.
- Digital Platforms

Potential benefits:

- Through the process of ZED certification, MSMEs can increase their productivity by reducing wastage to a great extent and can make optimum use of natural resources and expand their markets by saving energy by increasing environmental awareness.

ZED Scheme

- The scheme launched by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the year 2016 is an integrated and comprehensive certification system.
- The scheme is responsible for technical functions including productivity, quality, pollution mitigation, energy efficiency, financial condition, human resources and design and intellectual property rights (IPR) in both products and processes.
- Its mission is to develop and implement 'ZED' culture in India based on the principle of Zero Defect Zero Effect.

Zero Defect:

- Zero Defect concept is a customer centric concept.
- Zero non-conformity or non-compliance.
- Zero Waste

Zero Effect:

- Zero air pollution, liquid discharge, solid waste.
- Zero wastage of natural resources.

Objective of the scheme

- To develop a 'Zero Defect' ecosystem in the MSME sector.
- To promote optimization of quality equipment/systems and energy efficient manufacturing.
- Enabling MSMEs to manufacture quality products.

- To encourage MSMEs to continuously upgrade their quality standards in products and processes.
- To develop professionals in the field of ZED manufacturing and certification.
- Supporting the 'Make in India' campaign.

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Atal Innovation Mission

- Atal Innovation Mission launched Phase-I of the second edition of 'Atal New India Challenge' (ANIC 2.0).
- ANIC 1.0 was launched in the year 2018 to call upon innovations and technologies to be relevant to the people

Atal New India Challenge:

- Atal New India Challenge is a flagship program of Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog. The objective of the program is to seek, select, support and promote technology-based innovations that address regional challenges of national importance and social relevance.
- ANIC supports the selected startups in the commercialization phase during 12-18 months with solicitation of innovations in the prototype phase.

Approach:

- To solve problems of national importance and social relevance (production) by manufacturing products based on existing technologies.
- Helping to find new solutions, markets and initial customers (commercialisation) in the context of India

Objective

- To encourage innovations in important areas like education, health, water and sanitation, agriculture, food processing, housing, energy, mobility, space etc. for India's sustained growth and development.
- Supporting innovators on risks associated with access to resources for testing, piloting and market building, along with identifying the 'Commercialization Valley of Death' (the difference between research and commercialisation).

ANIC 1.0:

- ANIC 1.0 created an Open Innovation Challenge Format where challenge statements were published in the public domain and calls for applications were made.
- Installment based grant-in-aid up to Rs.1 crore to startup winners/individual innovators and assistance through AIM's innovation network.

ANIC 2.0:

- The first phase of ANIC 2.0 will address 18 challenges in 7 sectors, including e-mobility, road transport, space technology and applications, sanitation technology, medical equipment and materials, waste management and agriculture.

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):

- AIM is a flagship initiative of the Government of India to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.
- It aims to develop new programs and policies to promote innovation in various sectors of the economy, provide forums and opportunities for collaboration to various stakeholders, raise awareness among people and create an umbrella/innovative role for monitoring the innovation ecosystem of the country. To develop the umbrella structure.

Major Initiatives:

- Atal Tinkering Laboratory: Through this, to solve the problems of the students in the schools of the country, their mental development is to be done.
- Atal Incubation Centres: These have been established to promote world class startups and add a new dimension to the incubator model.
- Challenges of Atal New India: Promoting product innovations and tailoring them to the needs of different sectors/ministries.
- Mentor India Campaign: A national mentor network created in collaboration with the public sector, corporates and institutions to support all initiatives of the Mission.
- Atal Community Innovation Centre: To encourage community centric innovation and ideas in unprotected/protected areas of the country including Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

- Atal Research and Innovation for Small Enterprises (ARISE): To encourage innovation and research in the MSME industry.

<div align="right">**Swadeep Kumar**</div>

Sloth bear

- Recently, two sloth bears were rescued by the People for Animals Group (PFA) with the help of forest officials from a village in Jharkhand.
- The People for Animals is an animal welfare organization founded by Maneka Gandhi.
- The PFA was informed by the Madaris. Madari are a nomadic community who earn their living by using animals in street plays.

Sloth Beer:

- Sloth bears are found mainly in the Terai regions of Sri Lanka, India, Bhutan and Nepal.
- Sloth bears feed mainly on termites and ants and, unlike other bear species, they regularly carry their cubs on their backs.
- They are also very fond of eating honey, hence they are also called 'Honey Bear'.
- Sloth bears do not hibernate, that is, they do not go into a state of hibernation.
- Scientific name: Melursus ursinus (Melursus Ursinus).

- Habitat: Also called Honey Bear and Hindi Bear, it is part of the Ursidae family. They are found in tropical or sub-tropical regions of India and Sri Lanka.

Protection Status:

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- CITES: Appendix-I
- Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I

To risk:

- Habitat loss, poaching for body parts is the biggest threat to sloth bear species. Sloth bears are captured for use in spectacles or demonstrations. Also sloth bears are hunted for their aggressive behavior and damage to crops.

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100 years of establishment of Delhi University

- On 1st May 2022, the establishment of 'Delhi University' completed 100 years.

Establishment:

- The 'Delhi University' was established in the year 1922 by an act passed by the then British India's legislature – the Central Legislative Assembly.
- The University of Delhi originally consisted of three colleges – St. Stephen's College, which was established in the year 1881 by a missionary initiative called the 'Cambridge Mission to Delhi'; Hindu College, which was established in the year 1899, and Ramjas College, which was established on 14 May 1917 by Rai Kedar Nath, a renowned educationist and

philanthropist.

- Earlier these three colleges were affiliated to 'Punjab University'.

Role of Delhi University in India's Freedom Movement:

- In the year 1933 the erstwhile 'Viceregal Lodge' – where the 'Gandhi-Irwin Pact' had been signed two years earlier – became part of the university's assets. This colonial-era building now houses the office of the Vice-Chancellor.
- Although the 'Viceregal Lodge' was constructed in 1902, but before that there used to be a 'Hunting Lodge' in this place and during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, British officers fled and hid in this 'Hunting Lodge'.
- After the Central Assembly bombings of April 8, 1929, 'Bhagat Singh' was imprisoned in the Viceregal Lodge and was tried in the same building.
- When revolutionary Chandrashekhar Azad was living away from the British government, he was hid by the students of 'Ramjas College' (a college of the university).
- The students of 'Hindu College' (another college of the university) were actively involved in the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942.
- According to former Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh, Delhi University has a charter of its own, which was prepared by its then (1938-1950) Vice-Chancellor, 'Maurice Gwyer'. Maurice Gwyer was also the Chief Justice of India from 1937 to 1943.
- The Vice President of India acts as the 'Chancellor' of the University.
- It has been recognized as an Institute of Eminence (IoE) by the University Grants Commission (UGC).

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Undertrial Prisoners: India

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi advocated for the early release of 3.5 lakh

undertrials who have been in jails for years for not taking quick decisions in criminal cases and urged the Chief Ministers of the states and Chief Justices of the High Courts. It is requested to focus on solving this problem.

- The Prime Minister was addressing the 39th Conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices.

Need:

- 76 percent of the prisoners in India's prisons are 'undertrial prisoners', and this number is the highest in 25 years. These are the poor, downtrodden and poverty-stricken people, who are unable to pay the security deposit. These people rot in jails for years and their cases are not taken up.

Reasons for delay in getting justice:

- The overburdened judiciary is a major reason for delay in justice.
- Police and prison officers often fail to fulfill their roles, leading to delays in trial.
- Most of the cases under trial are from disadvantaged social groups – several surveys have found that 50-55% of the cases under trial are related to minority communities and depressed classes.
- Due to paucity of resources he is unable to find lawyers for himself, and the attitude of police and jail authorities is hostile towards him, and they rarely help him.

Suggestion:

- Keeping in view the human rights of prisoners, it is necessary that they are given proper accommodation and facilities in the jails.
- An 'Under Trial Prisoner Review Committee' should be constituted in each district consisting of District Judge, District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police. The responsibility of constituting such a panel for each district should be entrusted to the 'National Legal Services Authority', working in coordination with the 'State Legal Services Authority'.
- The 'Legal Services Authorities' in the states should play a major role in creating awareness among prisoners about their rights – especially the provisions relating to their 'right to liberty'.
- However, the real solution to this problem is not only in 'expeditious release of prisoners on bail', but in expediting the process of trial.

Comments made by the Supreme Court in May 2021:

- In its judgment, the Supreme Court of India, in view of the second unchecked escalation of the acute COVID-19 pandemic, ordered interim release to 'eligible prisoners'.

Main Comments:

- The apex court, in the case 'Arnesh Kumar v State of Bihar (2014)', stressed the need to adhere to the norms. In this case, the police were asked not to make unnecessary arrests—especially in cases involving punishment of less than seven years of imprisonment.
- The officers in all the districts of the country were asked to give effect to Section 436A of the 'Code of Criminal Procedure' (CrPC). Under Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure, undertrials who have completed half of the maximum jail term prescribed for an offense can be released on personal bond.
- The apex court had suggested the 'legislature' to consider making a provision for 'containment of convicts' to avoid overcrowding of prisons. In 2019, the prisoner rate in prisons had increased to 118.5%. Apart from this, a huge amount of budget is also required for the maintenance of the prisons.

Number of undertrials:

- India has the highest number of 'undertrial prisoners' in the world, and more than half of the total undertrials were detained in less than six months during 2016.
- According to the 'National Crime Records Bureau' (NCRB) report released in 2016, 4,33,033 people were lodged in jails in India at the end of 2016, of which 68% were undertrials.
- It suggests that the high proportion of 'undertrial prisoners' in total jailed prisoners may be the result of unnecessary arrests and ineffective legal aid during remand hearings.

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Anang Tal Lake: Delhi

- Recently the Ministry of Culture has ordered the restoration of the historic Anang Tal Lake located in South Delhi.
- The National Monuments Authority (NMA) and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have asked the authorities to expedite its conservation work so that the site can be declared a national monument

Key points:

- This lake is located in Mehrauli, Delhi, which was built by Tomar king Anangpal II in 1060 AD.
- He is known to have founded and settled Delhi in the 11th century.
- The millennium old Anang Tal symbolizes the early period of Delhi.
- Anang Tal has a strong connection with Rajasthan as Maharaja Anangpal is known as the maternal grandfather of Prithviraj Chauhan, whose fort Rai Pithora, is included in the list of ASI
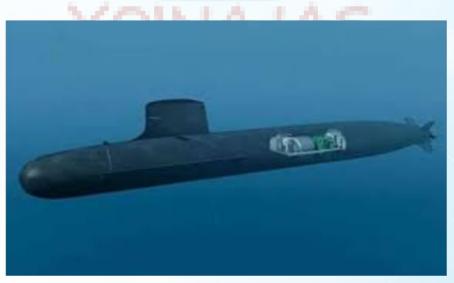
Anangpal II:

- Anangpal II, popularly known as Anangpal Tomar, belonged to the Tomar dynasty.
- He was the founder of Dhillika Puri, which eventually came to be known as Delhi.
- Evidence of the early history of Delhi is carved on the iron pillar of the Masjid Quwwat-ul-Islam adjacent to the Qutub Minar.
- Study of several inscriptions and coins shows that Anangpal Tomar was the ruler of Delhi and Haryana between 8th-12th century.

- He got the city built on the ruins and under his supervision got the construction of Anang Tal Baoli and Lal Kot.
- After Anangpal Tomar II, his grandson Prithviraj Chauhan became the successor.
- The Delhi Sultanate was established in 1192 after Prithviraj Chauhan's defeat against the Ghurid armies in the Battle of Tarain (present-day Haryana).

About Tomar Dynasty:

- The Tomar dynasty is one of the early medieval minor dynasties of northern India.
- Puranic evidence (writings of the Puranas) confirm its inclusion in the early dynasties of the Himalayan region. According to the Bhat tradition, the Tomar dynasty was one of the 36 Rajput tribes.
- The history of the dynasty can be traced back to the period of the reign of Anangpal who founded the city of Delhi in the 11th century and incorporated Delhi into the Chauhan (Chaman) kingdom in 1164.
- Although Delhi later became decisively part of the Chauhan Empire, numismatics and comparatively later literary evidence indicate that the Tomar kings such as Anangpal and Madanpal probably served as feudatories until the final conquest of Delhi by the Muslims in the year 1192–93.

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Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP)

- Recently France's Naval Group rejected the bid for the P-75 India project, saying it does not yet use Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) technology.

- About 10 countries have developed or are nearing to develop AIP technology and about 20 countries have AIP submarines.

Project-75 India:

- In June 1999, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved a 30-year submarine building plan that included building 24 conventional submarines by 2030.
- In the first phase, two series of production were to be established – the first, the P-75; Second, the P-75i. Each series was to produce six submarines.
- While the six P-75 submarines are diesel-electric, they can be equipped with AIP technology later.
- The project envisages indigenous construction of six conventional submarines equipped with state-of-the-art air-independent propulsion systems at an estimated cost of Rs 43,000 crore

Air independent propulsion:

- AIP is the technology for conventional non-nuclear submarines.
- There are essentially two types of submarines: conventional and nuclear.
- Conventional submarines use diesel-electric engines, which require them to surface daily to obtain atmospheric oxygen for fuel combustion.
- If the submarine is equipped with an AIP system, they will need to take oxygen only once a week.
- Indigenously developed AIP is one of the major missions of Naval Materials Research Laboratory (NMRL-DRDO), which is considered as one of the ambitious projects of DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation) for Navy.
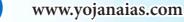
Fuel Cell Based AIP System:

- In fuel cell based AIP, the electrolytic fuel cell produces energy only by combining hydrogen and oxygen with water, thereby generating less marine polluting waste products.
- These cells are highly efficient and do not have moving parts, thus ensuring that the submarine has less noise emissions.

Advantages and Disadvantages of AIP:

Benefit:

- AIP has a force multiplier effect on the firepower of a diesel electric submarine as it multiplies the underwater capability of the boat.
- Fuel cell based AIP performs better than other technologies.
- AIP technology keeps a conventional submarine submerged for longer than normal diesel-electric submarines.
- All conventional submarines have to come to the surface to run their generators, which recharge their batteries and enable the boat to function underwater.
- However, the more often a submarine comes to the surface, the more likely it is to be monitored by enemies.
- AIP is able to keep a submarine underwater for around 15 days, compared to two to three days by diesel-electric boats

Loss:

- Installing AIP increases the length and weight of boats, requiring onboard pressurized liquid oxygen (LOX) storage and supplies for all three technologies.
- Some acoustic noise is generated from the moving parts of the MESMA (Autonomous Submarine Energy Module) and Stirling engine, which increases the unit cost of the submarine by about 10%.

Submarines currently available with India:

- India has 16 conventional diesel-electric submarines, classified as SSKs. With the commissioning of the last two Kalvari class submarines under the P-75, this number will increase to 18.
- India also has two nuclear ballistic submarines classified as Submersible Ship Ballistic Missile Nuclear-SSBN.
- India is estimated to have six diesel-electric, six AIP-powered and six nuclear strike submarines by the time the P-75I is completed under the 30-year project

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World press freedom index

- The 20th edition of the World Press Freedom Index was published by 'Reporters without Borders' (RSF) on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day (WPFD) on May 3, 2022.
- India is ranked 150 out of 180 countries.

World Press Freedom Day:

- After the recommendation of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1991, the United Nations General Assembly declared World Press Freedom Day in the year 1993.
- This day also marks the 'Windhoek' Declaration adopted by UNESCO in the year 1991.

- The 'Windhoek Declaration' of 1991 deals with the development of a free, independent and pluralistic press.

Theme of World Press Freedom Day 2022:

- Journalism under digital siege.

World Press Freedom Index:

- It is published every year by Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) or Reporters without Borders since 2002.
- Based in Paris, the RSF is an independent non-governmental organization with consultative status to the United Nations, UNESCO, the European Council and the International Organization for Francophony (OIF).
- The OIF is a grouping of 54 French-speaking nations.
- The index ranks countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists. However, it is not an indicator of the quality of journalism

Scoring Criteria:

- The ranking of the index is based on a score from 0 to 100 assigned to each country or region, with 100 representing the best possible score (the highest possible level of press freedom) and 0 representing the worst.

Evaluation Criteria:

- • The score for each country or region is assessed using five relevant indicators, including political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context and security.

Ranking of countries:

Top and worst performers:

- Norway (1st), Denmark (2nd), Sweden (3rd), Estonia (4th) and Finland (5th) have topped.
- North Korea ranked at the bottom of the list of 180 countries.
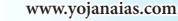- Russia has been placed at 155th position.

Neighbours of India:

- Nepal has jumped 30 points to rank 76th in the global rankings.
- The index has placed Pakistan at 157th, Sri Lanka at 146th, Bangladesh at 162nd and Myanmar at 176th.
- China is ranked 175th.

India's performance:

- India has slipped eight places to 150th out of 180 countries in 2022.
- India was ranked 133rd in the 2016 index, since then its ranking has been continuously declining.

- The reason behind the drop in the rankings is the rise in "violence against journalists" and "politically partisan media".

Reasons for the fall in India's ranking:

Government pressure:

- According to the index, the media in India is facing pressure from "increasingly authoritarian and/or nationalist governments" compared to democratically established nations.

Defects in the policy framework:

- Although the policy framework is protective in principle, it accuses journalists criticizing the government of defamation, sedition, contempt of court and endangering national security as "anti-national".

India most dangerous country in the world for media persons:

- According to the report, India is also one of the most dangerous countries in the world for media persons.
- Journalists face all forms of physical violence, including police violence, ambushes by political activists, and deadly retaliation by criminal groups or corrupt local officials

Freedom of Press in India:

- The Constitution is the supreme law of the country, which guarantees freedom of speech and expression under Article 19, which deals with the 'protection of certain rights with respect to freedom of speech, etc.'
- Freedom of the press is not expressly protected by the Indian legal system, but it is protected under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, according to which "all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".
- In Romesh Thapar v State of Madras, 1950 the Supreme Court held that freedom of the press is the foundation of all democratic organisations.
- However, even the freedom of the press is not complete in itself. Some restrictions have been imposed on it under Article 19(2), which are as follows-
- Sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality or contempt of court, defamation, abetment of any offence.

Swadeep Kumar

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PM's visit to Europe

- The Prime Minister of India is on a visit to three European countries – Germany, Denmark and France. His foreign visit comes at a time when Europe is witnessing the Russo-Ukraine war.
- The visit of the Indian Prime Minister highlights the importance India attaches to its relations with Europe.

Importance of Travel:
India-Germany Relations:

Background:

- Germany is one of India's most important partners in Europe, with deep bilateral ties and an important role in the European Union.
- India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany after World War II (WWII).
- India and Germany have a 'Strategic Partnership' since May 2000 and have been strengthened in 2011 with the launch of Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) at the level of Heads of Government.
- India is one of the few countries with which Germany has a dialogue system.

Importance:

- Germany has become an important strategic choice in the Russo-Ukraine War.
- It has decided to increase defense spending along with reducing its energy dependence on Russia, an important step in view of the situation after World War II.
- India is also dependent on Russia for defense supplies, so it will be important for India and Germany to exchange notes on strategic options and move away from Russia for their respective needs.

India-Denmark Relations:

Background:

- The bilateral ties were elevated to the level of "Green Strategic Partnership" during the virtual summit held in September 2020.

- The first India-Nordic summit to explore new areas of cooperation was held in April 2018.
- This cooperation is important because the Nordic countries – Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland have such cooperation only with the US.

Importance:

- The Nordic countries are leaders in innovation, clean energy, green technology, education, health care, human rights and the rule of law. Cooperation with these countries presents a huge opportunity for India to expand its strength.
- Also India presents opportunities for these countries due to its large market.
- Several new flagship schemes have been launched by India in which Nordic countries can actively participate and provide their expertise. Like Make in India, Smart Cities Mission, Start-up India, Clean Ganga etc.

Indo-French Relations:

Background:

- India and France have traditionally had close ties.
- In 1998, the two launched a strategic partnership, which had pillars of defense and security cooperation, space cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation.
- India and France have a strong economic partnership and are increasingly engaging in new areas of cooperation.
- France was also one of the few western countries that did not condemn India after the Pokhran trials of 1998.
- It continues to support India's claim for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.
- France's support was crucial in India's entry into the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group.
- France continues to support India to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- France has also supported India's requests to block Pakistan's efforts to enlist Indian citizens under the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee.

Importance:

- Common interests in the Indian Ocean: France needs to protect its colonial territorial assets, such as the Reunion Islands and the Indian Ocean being a sphere of influence for India.
- Counter-terrorism: France has supported India's proposal for a global conference on terrorism.
- Both countries also support the holding of a new "No Money for Terror"- An International Conference on Fighting Terrorist Financing.
- India's support by France: France has consistently supported India on Kashmir, while its relations with Pakistan have seen a decline in recent times and have skeptical relations with China.
- Defense Cooperation: India and France have entered a phase of close defense partnership. For example, recently the multi-role fighter class aircraft of France's Rafale has been inducted into the Indian Air Force (IAF).

India-Europe Relations:

Background:

- India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community in 1962.
- A cooperation agreement signed in 1994 further broadened the relationship by including ministerial-level meetings and political dialogues.
- These ties have been expanded to include political and security issues, climate change and clean energy, information and communication technology, space and nuclear, health, agriculture and food security, education and culture.

Importance of Travel:

- The visit to Europe is expected to set the stage for the India-EU summit and boost free trade agreement talks, which have been going on for the past decade and a half.

Swadeep Kumar

Citizen registration system

- According to the recently released Important Statistical Report based on the 2020 Civil Registration System Report (CRS), the highest sex ratio at birth in the country in the year 2020 was recorded in the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- The report was published by the Registrar General of India.
- Sex ratio at birth is the number of females born per thousand males. It is an important indicator in measuring the gender gap of the population.

Register General of India:

- The Registrar General of India was established in the year 1961 by the Government of India under

the Ministry of Home Affairs.

- It organizes, conducts and analyzes the results of demographic surveys of India, including the Census of India and the Language Survey of India.
- Often a civil servant is appointed to the post of Registrar, whose rank is similar to that of Joint Secretary.
- Registration of births and deaths in India is made mandatory with the enactment of the 'Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act' 1969 and is done according to the place of occurrence.
- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs' annual report for 2020-21, the central government is planning to reform the civil registration system to enable real-time registration of births and deaths with minimal human interface.

Birth and Death Registration (RBD) Act:

- The Birth and Death Registration Act was enacted in the year 1969 for uniformity in registration of births and deaths across the country and for compilation of important data on its basis.
- With the enactment of the Act, registration of births, deaths and stillbirths has become mandatory in India.
- The registration of births and deaths in the country is done by the officials appointed by the state governments.
- Directorate of Census Operations is a subordinate office of the Office of the Registrar General and this office is responsible for monitoring the working of the Act in their respective State and Union Territory.

Key points of the report

- High sex ratio at birth: It is recorded in the year 2020 in Ladakh (1104) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1011), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (984), Tripura (974) and Kerala (969).
- The highest sex ratio at birth in the year 2019 was recorded in Arunachal Pradesh (1024) followed by Nagaland (1001), Mizoram (975) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (965).
- Information on sex ratio at birth was "not available" from Maharashtra, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi.
- Lowest Sex Ratio at Birth: Manipur (880), Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu (898), Gujarat (909), Haryana (916) and Madhya Pradesh (921).
- The lowest sex ratio in the year 2019 was recorded in Gujarat (901), Assam (903), Madhya Pradesh (905) and Jammu and Kashmir (909).
- Birth rate: in registered birth rates in states like Nagaland, Puducherry, Telangana, Manipur, Delhi, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Gujarat, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, Mizoram and Chandigarh a decline was recorded.
- Increase in registered birth rate has been recorded in Lakshadweep, Bihar, Haryana, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- Mortality: Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Nagaland, Haryana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Andaman and Nicobar and Assam in the year 2020 as compared to the year 2019 There has been an increase in the rate.

- Bihar has the highest mortality rate at 18.3% followed by Maharashtra with 16.6% and Assam with 14.7%.
- Meanwhile, states like Manipur, Chandigarh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Puducherry, Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala have seen a decrease in the death rate in 2020 as compared to 2019.
- Infant Mortality: The report states that in the year 2020, 1,43,379 infant deaths were registered in which the share of rural area was only 23.4%, while 76.6% of the total registered infant deaths have been registered in the urban area.
- Non-registration of infant deaths in rural areas due to non-reporting of infant deaths to the registrars was a matter of concern, especially in the case of domestic events.

Swadeep Kumar

Mercy petition

- Recently, the 'Supreme Court' has advised the central government to release the convict convicted in the assassination case of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, as he has already served more than three decades.

Further actions:

- The Supreme Court has also advised the Central Government to take action against the Governor of Tamil Nadu, as the Governor has decided to "ignore" the binding advice of the 'State Cabinet' regarding the release of the 'convict'.

Related case:

- The Governor of Tamil Nadu, ignoring the advice of the 'State Cabinet', has said that the President has the right to decide on the 'Mercy Plea' petition.

About Article 161:

- Under Article 161 of the Constitution, the Governor of a State shall, in relation to the matter to

which the executive power of that State extend, pardon, suspend, the punishment of any person convicted of an offense against any law, Power to suspend or remit or to suspend, remit or commute a sentence is given.

Article 72 vs. Article 161:

- The extent of the pardoning power of the President under Article 72 of the Constitution of India is wider than the pardoning power of the Governor under Article 161.

This power differs in the following two ways:

- The pardoning power of the President under Article 72 extends to the punishment or punishment awarded by the Court Martial, whereas, under Article 161 no such power has been conferred on the Governor.
- The President has the power to grant pardon in all cases of capital punishment, but the pardoning power of the Governor does not extend to the death penalty.

Importance of Pardoning Power:

- The pardoning power of the executive is very important as it corrects the errors committed by the judiciary. It removes the effect of conviction of the accused without considering his guilt or innocence.
- Pardoning power is very helpful in saving an innocent person from being punished in case of error or doubtful conviction of the judiciary.
- The purpose of pardoning power is to correct judicial errors. Because no judicial administration related human system can be free from flaws.

Swadeep Kumar

United Nations world food program

- According to the 'United Nations World Food Programme', many countries are facing food security challenges due to the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, in view of this 'World Food Program', with India to purchase wheat negotiating.

Background:

- In February 2022, India signed an agreement with the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) for the distribution of 50,000 metric tonnes of wheat as part of its commitment to send humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. Had gone.
- India's wheat production stood at 109.59 million tonnes in the 2020-21 crop year (July-June).

United Nations' World Food Programme:

- The World Food Program (WFP) is the 'food aid arm' of the United Nations, and is the world's largest humanitarian organization that addresses the problem of hunger and promotes food security.
- Launched in 1961, the 'World Food Program' seeks to end hunger and malnutrition, and its ultimate goal is 'to end the need for food aid'.
- The program is a member of the United Nations Development Group and is a part of its Executive Committee.
- WFP food assistance is also provided to fight micronutrient deficiencies, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and fight disease including HIV and AIDS.

The United Nations World Food Programme, based in Rome, works in conjunction with the other two agencies of the United Nations:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which helps countries make policy and change laws to support sustainable agriculture.

- 'International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which finances ongoing projects in poor rural areas.

Financing:

- The World Food Program (WFP) has no independent source for 'funding', it is funded entirely by voluntary donations. The major donors to this program are the governments of the member countries, but the organization also receives grants from the private sector and individuals.

Swadeep Kumar

Citizenship

- Recently, Home Minister Amit Shah has reiterated that the 'Citizenship (Amendment) Act' (CAA) will be implemented as soon as the Kovid-19 pandemic ends.

About the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA), was passed by Parliament on December 11, 2019, within 24 hours of the Act being notified on December 12.
- The purpose of this amendment is to amend the 'Citizenship Act', 1955.
- In the 'Citizenship Act, 1955' various methods have been prescribed for obtaining citizenship.
- Under this, a provision has been made to acquire citizenship in India on the basis of birth, hereditary, registration, natural and territory incorporation.

About the 'Citizenship (Amendment) Act':

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), aims to provide Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities – Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians – from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- According to the Act, persons from these communities facing persecution on religious grounds in their respective countries who had migrated to India till December 31, 2014, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but will be given Indian citizenship.
- As per another provision of the Act, the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) registration of overseas citizens can also be canceled by the central government on certain grounds.

Exception:

- Being included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, this Act does not apply to the tribal areas of Tripura, Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya.
- Apart from this, the areas falling under the 'Inner Limit' notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873 will also be out of the purview of this Act.

Issues related to this law:

- This law violates the basic principles of the constitution. Under this, illegal migrants have been identified on the basis of religion.

- The law is deemed a demographic threat to local communities.

- In this, illegal migrants have been determined to be eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. Also, this would violate Article 14 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to equality.

- It seeks to naturalize the citizenship of illegal migrants settling in an area.

- Under this, the government has been given the power to cancel the OCI registration of migrant citizens for violation of any law. This is a fairly broad base that can cover a wide range of violations, including minor offences.

Swadeep Kumar