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WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX (2024)

Context:

- Recently, the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released its latest edition of World Press Freedom Index.

About the Press Freedom

- RSF defines **press freedom** as 'the ability of journalists as individuals and collectives to select, produce, and disseminate news in the public interest independent of political, economic, legal, and social interference and in the absence of threats to their physical and mental safety'.

World Press Freedom Index

- It is published annually by **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** that ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists.
 - It has been published **every year since 2002**.
- It provides a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework, and safety of journalists in each country and region.
- It is based on the **principle of emulation** between states and has grown in influence over governments due to its well-known status.
- The **press freedom questionnaire** covers five categories — **political context, legal framework, economic context, socio-cultural context and security**.

Key Findings of the World Press Freedom Index (2024)

- Threat to Press Freedom:** Press freedom around the world is being threatened by the very people who should be its guarantors – political authorities.
- Decline in Political Indicator:** Of the **five indicators** used to compile the ranking, it is the **political indicator** that has fallen most, registering a global average fall of 7.6 points.
 - It indicates a worrying trend of political pressures impacting journalism.
- Failure of Governments to Protect Journalism:** A growing number of governments and political authorities are not fulfilling their role as guarantors of the best possible environment for journalism

and for the public's right to reliable, independent, and diverse news and information.

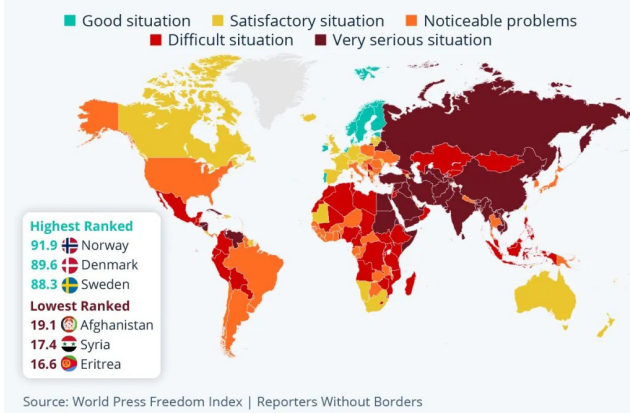
- Increase in State Pressure and Hostile Actions:** There is an increase in pressure from the state or other political actors that undermine the role of journalists, or even instrumentalise the media through campaigns of harassment or disinformation.
- Lack of International Will:** At the international level, there is a clear lack of political will on the part of the international community to enforce the principles of protection of journalists, especially **UN Security Council Resolution 2222** (on protection of journalists and associated media personnel in armed conflict).

Global Scenario

- The World Press Freedom Index (2024) revealed a two-fold increase in '**polarisation**' amplified by information chaos.
 - It refers to media polarisation fuelling divisions within countries, as well as polarisation between countries at the international level.
- Norway, Denmark, and Sweden** occupied the top positions in press freedom, while **Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea** constituted the bottom three.

The State of World Press Freedom

Countries ranked by level of press freedom in 2024



India's Standing in the Index

Country	Ranking
Nepal	95
Pakistan	150
Sri Lanka	135
India	161
Myanmar	173

Source : World Press Freedom Index

Indian media landscape has more than **100,000** newspapers, including **36,000** weeklies and **380 TV** channels.

- India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has seen a decline over the years.
- In 2022, India was ranked 150th out of 180 countries.
- However, in 2023, India's ranking slipped further to 161st.
- **In 2024**, India's score in the World Press Freedom Index **fell from 36.62 to 31.28**, but its **rank improved** from 161 in 2023 to **159 in 2024**.
 - ♦ It was due to other countries slipping in their rankings.

Press Freedom and Constitution of India

- The press plays a vital role in a democratic society. It serves as an agency of the people to gather news for them.
 - ♦ It is the means by which people receive a free flow of information and ideas, which is essential to intelligent self-governance, that is, democracy.
- In India, freedom of the press has been treated as part of the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by **Article 19 (1) (a)** of the Constitution.
 - ♦ It has been upheld in various landmark judgments of the Supreme Court of India.
- However, as mentioned in **Article 19 (2)**, reasonable restrictions can be placed on this right, in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.
 - ♦ Hence, **freedom of the media is not an absolute freedom**.
 - ♦ While the Constitution provides for press freedom, it also mandates that the press must be responsible.

Conclusion

- The freedom of the press is a fundamental right enshrined in the Indian Constitution. It plays a crucial role in the functioning of a democratic society. However, with this freedom comes responsibility.
- The press must ensure that the news they present is accurate and serves the interest of the people.
 - ♦ The balance between freedom and responsibility is key to maintaining a healthy democracy.

- The World Press Freedom Index highlights the challenges faced by journalists and the media, and underscores the importance of a free press in maintaining a healthy democracy.
 - ♦ Despite the concerning decline in rankings for some countries, the index continues to be a beacon of hope, advocating for the rights of journalists and the media worldwide.

Source: TH

E-COMMERCE MARKET IN INDIA

Context:

- Recently, Invest India found that India, with its rapidly growing digital economy and expanding internet user base, is poised to become a global ecommerce powerhouse by 2030.

About the e-commerce market in India

India's e-commerce Sector:

- *Business-to-Business (B2B)*
- *Direct-to-Consumer (D2C)*
 - Major segments such as D2C and B2B have experienced immense growth in recent years.
 - India's D2C market is expected to reach US\$ 60 billion by FY27.
- *Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C)*
- *Consumer-to-Business (C2B)*.

- India, with its rapidly growing digital economy and expanding internet user base, is on the brink of a massive transformation in its retail sector.
- At present, the e-commerce market in India is valued at \$70 billion, which accounts for around 7% of the nation's overall retail market.
- It is predicted **to grow to a staggering \$325 billion**, and the country's digital economy is expected to reach \$800 billion.
- The number of online shoppers in India is projected to increase with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 22% to 88 million in rural India and 15% to 263 million across urban India between 2019 and 2026.
- It is expected to lead to India surpassing the US as the second largest online shopper base in one to two years.

Attractive Opportunities

- India's e-commerce platforms achieved a significant milestone, hitting a GMV of US\$ 60 billion in fiscal year 2023, marking a 22% increase from the previous year.
- The e-retail market in India is projected to surpass US\$ 160 billion by 2028.

Rise of the Digital Economy

- India currently boasts the **second-largest internet user base** in the world, with over 900 million users.
- By 2030, it is expected to **rise to the third position in the online retail industry**.
- This growth is driven by **increasing internet penetration**, with around 87% of Indian households expected to have internet connections by 2025.
- The duration of internet access through mobiles has seen a **21% rise** compared to 2019.

Role of Mass Consumers

- Indian consumers with annual incomes ranging from INR 2.5 lakh to INR 10 lakh will be responsible for driving nearly half of the growth in India's \$300 billion e-commerce market by 2030.
- These 'mass' consumers are projected to contribute around \$135 billion (45%) to the Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of the e-commerce market by 2030.
- Invest India predicted a significant increase in the number of households engaging in e-commerce transactions, from 60-70 million in 2022 to 120-130 million by 2030.
 - ♦ Notably, mass consumers are anticipated to drive over 80% of this growth.

Challenges associated with e-commerce market in India

- **Digital Infrastructure and Internet Penetration:** The robustness of digital infrastructure is crucial for smooth and seamless online transactions.
 - ♦ Any disruption in the digital infrastructure can lead to transaction failures, affecting the trust and confidence of consumers in e-commerce.
 - ♦ While **internet penetration** is increasing in India, there is still a significant portion of the population, particularly in rural areas, that does not have access to the internet.

- **Platform Neutrality and Fairness:** There are concerns about lack of platform neutrality, unfair platform-to-business contract terms, exclusive contracts between online marketplace platforms and sellers/service providers, platform price parity restrictions, and deep discounts.
- **Taxation:** The provisions on carry-forward of losses need to be more accommodative of business restructuring, and withholding tax norms need more clarity.
- **Inclusion of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):** SMEs often find it challenging to participate in the e-commerce ecosystem due to the need for separate infrastructures for different platforms, distinct terms and conditions of each platform, and the costs associated with these.
- **Regulatory Challenges:** E-commerce businesses in India also face regulatory challenges including issues related to data protection, consumer protection, taxation, and other legal and regulatory compliances.

Related Initiatives to Overcome Challenges

- **Policy Support:** 100% FDI is allowed in B2B e-commerce.
 - ♦ 100% FDI under the automatic route is permitted in the marketplace model of E-commerce.
- **Government e-Marketplace (GeM):** It has facilitated government procurement, crossing an impressive INR 4 Lakh Cr in GMV.
- **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):** It aims to provide equal opportunities to MSMEs to thrive in digital commerce and democratise e-commerce.
- Other major initiatives include **Digital India** (to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy), **Skill India** (to train people in different skills), **Startup India** (to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country), **Make in India** (to encourage companies to manufacture their products in India), **Innovation Fund** (aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in the country), and **BharatNet** (to grow rural broadband penetration) etc.

Conclusion

- The rapid growth of India's digital economy, coupled with the increasing internet penetration and the rise of the mass consumer segment, is set to propel India to become the world's third-largest e-commerce market by 2030.

- It presents a tremendous opportunity for businesses and investors alike, making India one of the most attractive markets for ecommerce in the world.

Source: TOI

INDIA AND INDONESIA COLLABORATION

In News

- India and Indonesia agreed to enhance collaboration in areas of **defence industry, maritime security and multilateral cooperation.**

About the collaboration

- **Historical Linkages:** India and Indonesia share two-millennia old close cultural and commercial contacts.
 - ♦ The **Hindu, Buddhist and later Muslim faith** travelled to Indonesia from the shores of India.
 - ♦ The stories from great epics of **Ramayana and Mahabharata** form a source of Indonesian folk art and dramas.
 - ♦ The **famous Bali Yatra**, a week-long festival, is celebrated with a great deal of fervour and gaiety in both India and Indonesia.
- **Political Relations:** The struggle against colonial powers, democratic traditions, pluralist culture, and progressive leadership are some of the common strands connecting India and Indonesia.
 - ♦ President Sukarno of Indonesia was the **Guest of Honour during the first Republic Day of India in 1950.**
 - ♦ Independent India and Indonesia became chief votaries of independence of Asian and African countries, the spirit of which led to historic Bandung Conference of 1955 and later formation of **NonAligned Movement in 1961.**
 - ♦ Since the adoption of India's '**Look East Policy**' in 1991, and its upgradation to '**Act East**' in 2014, there has been a rapid development of bilateral relations in political, security, defence, commercial and cultural fields.
 - ♦ India and Indonesia have a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** and have arrived at a shared vision of the Indo-Pacific.
- **Commercial Relations :** Indonesia has **emerged as India's largest trade partner in the ASEAN region.**

- ♦ The **Total Bilateral Trade** during the fiscal year 2022-23 was USD 38.85 Billion (growth of 48% from last FY) with USD 10.02 Billion (18% growth) worth export and USD 28.82 Billion (62% growth) worth imports.
- ♦ India is the **second largest buyer of coal and crude palm oil** from Indonesia and imports minerals, rubber, pulp and paper and hydrocarbons reserves.
- ♦ India **exports refined petroleum products, commercial vehicles**, telecommunication equipment, agriculture commodities, bovine meat, steel products and plastics to Indonesia.
 - Indonesia is an attractive destination for Indian investment
- In the **defence sector**, both countries have been working closely and organized Samudra Shakti, a bilateral maritime exercise, and Garuda Shakti, a joint military exercise, every year.

Recent Developments

- The first-ever "**India-Indonesia Defence Industry Exhibition-cum-Seminar**" was organised in Jakarta by the two countries as they marked the 75th year of establishment of diplomatic ties.
- Indonesia is also keen to **build its own defence industry** and offered to share **India's experiences** in this regard and also to partner for long-term collaborations in the defence sector.
- The **Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM)**, and Pinhantanas, Indonesia's national private defence industry association will sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote and strengthen the defence industry partnership between the two countries.

Future Outlook

- India and Indonesia had civilizational connections for more than two thousand years. Both countries being maritime neighbours and strategic partners have important and close relations.
- In current times, this partnership is characterised by close cooperation in bilateral and multilateral arena, including frequent high-level interactions,"
- Indonesia is an important partner in **India's Act East Policy and the Indo-Pacific region.**
 - ♦ The two countries have the huge potential to grow further in the coming years with increasing bilateral and community relations.

Source:TH

2ND SESSION OF INDIA-NIGERIA JOINT TRADE COMMITTEE MEETING

In News

- Indian officials held a Joint Trade Committee (JTC) meeting with their Nigerian counterparts.

Outcomes

- Both sides identified several areas of focus for enhancing bilateral trade as well as mutually beneficial investments.
 - These include resolving of market access issues of both sides, and cooperation in key sectors such as crude oil and natural gas, pharmaceuticals, UPI, local currency settlement system, power sector and renewable energy, agri and food Processing, education, transport, railway, aviation, MSMEs
- They also agreed to the early conclusion of the Local Currency Settlement System Agreement to further strengthen bilateral economic ties.

About India-Nigeria

- India and Nigeria are playing an **important role in South-South Cooperation**.
- In the multilateral organisations particularly the **United Nations, G77 and NAM**, both countries have been articulating the voice of the developing world in a coordinated and effective manner.
- India established its **Diplomatic House in Lagos in November 1958**, two years before **Nigeria became independent in 1960**.
- India is emerging as a development partner of Nigeria in two fronts –by offering **developmental assistance** through **concessional loans and by offering capacity building training** programmes.
- Nigeria is the **second largest trading partner of India** in the Africa region.
- Bilateral trade between **India and Nigeria declined to \$7.89 billion** in 2023-24 from \$11.8 billion in 2022-23.
- With a total investment of \$27 billion, about 135 Indian companies are actively engaged in Nigeria.
 - These investments traverse diverse sectors, encompassing infrastructure, manufacturing, consumer goods and services.

Source:TH

NEWS IN SHORT

OXYTOCIN

Context

- Recently, the Delhi High Court has taken serious note of the continued use of the **Oxytocin in dairies** across the national capital which amounts to ‘**animal cruelty**’.

About Oxytocin

- It is a hormone that is **naturally secreted by the pituitary glands of mammals** during sex, childbirth, lactation, or social bonding.
- It is being administered to cattle to force milk let-down and increase the production of milk.
 - It is not only harmful to the health of the cattle but also to humans who consume the milk.
- The **Union government** had **banned the use of Oxytocin in 2018**, citing its misuse on milch cattle to increase yield.
 - Despite the ban, the hormone continues to be used in dairies across Delhi.

Source: IE

SWELL WAVES

Context

- The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has forecasted that swell waves might hit several Indian coastal areas in the upcoming days.

What are Swell Waves?

- They are high sea waves that are formed by an ocean swell.
- Ocean swells occur due to distant storms like hurricanes and not due to the local winds.
- During such storms, huge energy transfer takes place from the air into the water, leading to the formation of very high waves.
- Such waves can travel thousands of kilometres from the storm centre until they strike shore.
 - In March 2024, swell waves led to flooding in several areas of Kerala. Such flooding events are called Kallakkadal in Kerala.
- To forecast swell waves, INCOIS launched the **Swell Surge Forecast System** in 2020 which can give forewarning seven days in advance.

Source: IE

GI TAG TO KUTCH AJRAKH

In News

- Ajrakh from Kutch gets GI tag by the Office of the **Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trademarks (CGPDTM)**.

About Ajrakh

- The term **“Ajrakh”** is derived from the word ‘Azrak,’ which means indigo, a primary dye used in the printing process.
- Ajrakh is a traditional textile craft originating from Gujarat, particularly in **areas like Sindh, Barmer, and Kutch**.
- This art form involves intricate **hand-block printing on specially treated cotton fabric**, creating elaborate designs that are steeped in symbolism and historical significance.
- Introduced more than **400 years ago by Sind Muslims, Ajrakh** is a popular attire among nomadic pastoralist and agricultural communities such as the Rabaris, Maldharis, and Ahirs.

Source: TOI

ETA AQUARIID METEOR SHOWER

In News

- The Eta Aquariid meteor shower, which has been active since April 15, will peak on May 5 and 6.

About Eta Aquariid meteor shower

- Eta Aquariid meteors are **known for their speed**, with the meteors travelling at about 148,000 mph (66 km/s) into Earth’s atmosphere.
 - Fast meteors can leave glowing “trains” (incandescent bits of debris in the wake of the meteor) which last for several seconds to minutes.
- The Eta Aquariid meteor shower is formed when **Earth passes** through the orbital plane of the **famous Halley’s Comet**

- The Eta Aquarids peak during early May each year.
- The Eta Aquarids are viewable in both the **Northern and Southern hemispheres during the pre-dawn hours**.
 - The Southern Hemisphere is preferable for viewing the Eta Aquarids.
 - The Northern Hemisphere has an hourly rate of only about 10 meteors.
 - This is due to the viewing location of the radiant from different latitudes.

Where Do Meteors Come From?

- Meteors come from leftover comet particles and bits from broken asteroids**.
- When comets come around the Sun, they leave a dusty trail behind them.
- A meteor shower can be observed when Earth passes through the clouds of dust left behind in a comet’s orbital plane.
 - The sky lights up with small and large meteor tails as the debris left behind by the comet interacts with Earth’s atmosphere.

Do you know ?

- Comet Halley takes about 76 years** to orbit the Sun once.
 - The last time comet Halley was seen by casual observers was in 1986. Comet Halley will not enter the inner solar system again until 2061.
- Comet Halley was discovered in 1705** by Edmund Halley.
 - He predicted the orbit of the comet through past observations of comets, suggesting that these sightings were in fact all the same comet. Halley is perhaps the most famous comet. It has been sighted for millennia.
 - This comet is even featured in the Bayeux tapestry, which chronicles the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Source:IE

