

World Press Freedom Index

❖ Context

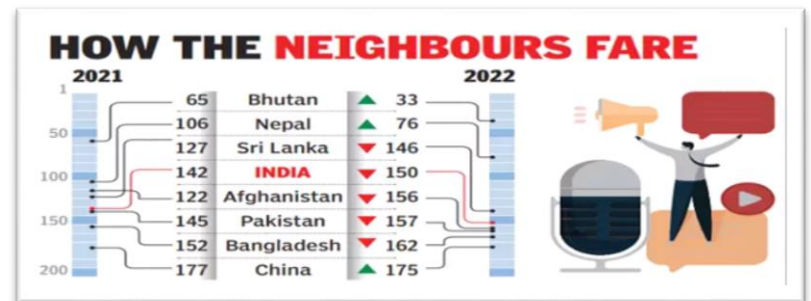
- Recently, the **20th edition of the World Press Freedom Index** was published by **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)** on the **World Press Freedom Day (WPDF)** (3rd May).

❖ World Press Freedom Index

- It is an **annual ranking of countries** published by Reporters Without Borders since 2002. It **publishes based upon the organization's own assessment** of the countries' press freedom records in the previous year.
- **Purpose:**
 - To **reflect the degree of freedom** that journalists, news organizations, and netizens have in each country.
 - To **show the efforts made by authorities to respect this freedom.**
- The index **only deals with press freedom** and **does not measure the quality of journalism** in the countries it assesses, nor does it look at human rights violations in general.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Each country or territory's score is evaluated using **five contextual indicators** : **political context, legal framework, economic context, sociocultural context and safety.**

❖ Key Highlights of the Index

- **Best performing Countries:**
 - **Norway (1st)**, Denmark (2nd), Sweden (3rd) Estonia (4th) and Finland (5th) grabbed the top positions.
- **Worst Performing Countries:**
 - **North Korea : 180th.**
 - Russia was placed at 155th position, down from 150th last year.
 - China climbed up by two positions ranking at 175th position, as compared to 177th position last year.
 - India's Neighbors.



❖ India's Performances

- India's ranking has **fallen down to 150th position** from last year's 142nd rank out of 180 countries.
- **Reasons for the Fall in Ranking:**
 - As per the index, press freedom is in **"crisis in the world's largest democracy"**.
 - India's ranking fell on the back of increased **"violence against journalists"** and a **"politically partisan media"**.
 - With an average of **three or four journalists killed** in connection with their work every year.
 - **Journalists are exposed to all kinds of physical violence** including police violence, ambushes by political activists, and deadly reprisals by criminal groups or corrupt local officials.
 - **In Kashmir, reporters are often harassed by police and paramilitaries**, with some being subjected to so-called 'provisional' detention for several years.

Repo Rate

❖ Context

- Recently, the **central bank's monetary policy committee (MPC)** voted unanimously to **increase the repo rate** by 40 basis points (bps) in an off-cycle meeting to tame inflation.

❖ Key Highlights

- The repo rate, after the surprise move, now **stands at 4.40 per cent**, with immediate effect.
- The repo rate has been **increased for the first time since August 2018.**
- The **standing deposit facility (SDF)** rate is adjusted to 4.15 per cent.
- The **marginal standing facility (MSF)** rate and the Bank Rate to 4.65 per cent.
- **CRR of banks increased by 50 basis points to 4.5 per cent** of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL):
 - The 50 bps hike in CRR **will suck out Rs 87,000 crore** from the banking system.
 - The lendable resources of banks will come down accordingly.

- **Rationale Behind Increased Repo:** The **headline inflation** number in March had touched **7 per cent**, driven by food inflation due to the impact of adverse spill overs from unprecedented high global food prices.

❖ About Repo Rate

- Repo rate is the rate of interest at which **commercial banks borrow money from the central bank** i.e. Reserve bank of India (RBI).
- In the case of **inflation, RBI increases the repo rate**, and in the case of deflation decreases it.
- **RBI increases the repo rate to remove the excess supply of the money** out of the market.
- **Reverse repo rate:** Reverse repo rate is the rate of interest at which commercial banks keep their deposit with the central bank.

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❖ Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- Under Section 45ZB of the amended **RBI Act, 1934**, the central government is empowered to constitute a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- The **first such MPC was constituted on September 29, 2016**.
- **Functions:**
 - It **determines the policy interest rate** required to achieve the inflation target.
 - **Decisions are taken by majority** with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie.
 - The decision of the Monetary Policy Committee shall be **binding on the Bank**.

• **Composition: Six members (including the Chairman):**

- RBI Governor as Its Exofficio Chairperson.
- The Deputy Governor Incharge Of Monetary Policy.
- An officer of the Bank to be nominated by the Central Board.
- Three Persons to be appointed by the central government.

Project 75I

❖ Context

- France's Naval Group, one of five shortlisted Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) for the Navy's P-75 India (P-75I) project to build six conventional submarines within the country, announced it would not bid for the project.
- The reason, Naval Group said, was that the Request for Proposal (RFP) requires that the fuel cell AIP be sea proven, which is not the case for them yet since the French Navy does not use such a propulsion system.

❖ Background

- Cabinet Committee on Security approved in 1999 a **30-year plan for Navy** to indigenously build and induct **24 submarines by 2030**.
- In the first phase, two lines of production, each for 6 submarines were to be established.
 - P-75.
 - P-75I.
- Under P-75, Mazgaon Dock Shipbuilders has built 6 Kalvari class (Scorpene class) submarines in partnership with the Naval Group, then known as DCNS.

❖ About P75I

- This will be India's first project under **Strategic Partnership Model**.
- The government will give a contract to an **Indian Strategic Partner (SP)**, which will partner with a foreign OEM to build **AIP-powered submarines** in the country.
- One of the major requirement is to demonstrate a sea proven fuel cell AIP.

❖ What is AIP?

- It refers to **Air Independent Propulsion Plant**.
- The technology allows a **conventional submarine to remain submerged for much longer period** (more than 14 days) than ordinary diesel electric submarines (2-3 days). All **conventional submarines have to come to surface to run their generators** that recharge the batteries that allow the boat to function under water.
- However, the more frequently a submarine surfaces, the higher the chance of it being detected.
- Fuel Cell AIP convert chemical energy into electrical energy which charge the batteries.
- Around 10 countries have developed or are close to building AIP technology, and almost 20 nations have AIP submarines.
- Six P-75 submarines can be fitted with the technology later in their lives.

❖ Indian Submarines

- **18** : conventional diesel-electric submarines, classified as **SSKs (2 Kalvari class submarines are under trials)**.
 - 04 : Shishumar Class - bought and built with Germany cooperation.
 - 08 : Kilo or Sindhughosh Class - bought from Russia between 1984 and 2000.
 - 06 : Kalvari Class.
- **02** : **submersible nuclear ballistic submarines, classified as SSBN**.

News in Between the Lines

Asiatic Cheetah

❖ Context

- A rare and highly-endangered **female Asiatic Cheetah, named 'Iran'**, has given birth to three cubs in captivity at Touran Wildlife Refuge in Iran.

❖ Key Highlights

- The birth has been termed as the **world's first childbirth in captivity for the subspecies**.
- Iran had reported this January that the **Asiatic Cheetah was down to just 12, from an estimated 100 in 2010**. Drought, hunters and car accidents had caused the drastic decline in their numbers.

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- The cheetah or **Acinonyx Jubatus**, the fastest terrestrial animal on earth, was once found in Africa, Iran and India. The **cheetahs found in Iran and India are classified as the 'Asiatic' (Acinonyx jubatus venaticus) subspecies, different from the African.**
- In **1947**, Maharaja Ramanuj Pratap Singh, the ruler of a small princely state in today's Chhattisgarh shot **India's last three surviving cheetahs**. The animal was declared officially **extinct in the Republic of India in 1952.**
- The **critically endangered subspecies is currently only surviving in Iran.**

❖ Context

- As per official data, Insolvency resolution professionals have so far flagged dubious transactions by the suspended managements amounting to over ₹2.2 trillion.

❖ Key Highlights

- **Insolvency resolution professionals (IP)** are hired by lenders to administer bankrupt companies.
- As per IBC, the **IP is responsible for forming an opinion** (on or before the 75th day) on whether the erstwhile board of directors/promoters has carried out any transactions (**avoidance transactions**) that are prejudicial to the interest of the stakeholders. Based on the opinion formed, the IP appoints the **transaction auditor** who carries the **look-back review** for two years or more, as the case may be. The look-back period is greater in case of **related party transactions.**
- Avoidance transactions are categorised into four by the IBC:
 - I. **Preferential** : In favour of a creditor/surety/guarantor putting him in a more beneficial position than it would have been in the event of a distribution of assets.
 - II. **Undervalued** : By way of a gift or by paying a consideration which is significantly less than what the debtor had paid for the asset.
 - III. **Fraudulent** : A deliberate undervalued transaction to keep assets out of reach of an entitled debt claimant.
 - IV. **Extortionate** : Debtor makes exorbitant payments w.r.t the credit, or the terms were unconscionable under the principles of law relating to contracts.
- The **Report** : In the form of a petition-is to be filed (on or before the 135th day) before the **NCLT**. Accordingly, the **tribunal adjudicates** on the petition as deemed necessary to neutralise the effect of such transactions by either reversing the transaction or replenishing the stakeholders for the loss made by the parties involved. A resolution professional can request a tribunal to annul an undervalued transaction of the bankrupt company dating back upto two years in the case of related party transactions and upto one year in the case of others.

Avoidance Transactions



Jivhala



❖ Context

- The **Maharashtra Department of Prisons** has launched a **loan scheme for inmates serving sentences in jails** across the state.

❖ Key Highlights

- The credit scheme, meaning 'affection' in Marathi, is being **offered by the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank**. The pilot was introduced for prisoners at Yerawada Central Jail in Pune, and will gradually be extended to nearly 60 prisons across the state. According to bank and prison officials, this is likely **the first kind of credit scheme for prisoners in India**. Existing loans initiatives for inmates are for rehabilitation after completion of their prison terms.

❖ Features

- Convicted inmates undergoing a **prison sentence of more than three years** - eligible. Loan will be disbursed in the name of the inmate but it will be **issued to designated family members.**
- In the initial phase, a loan of **Rs 50,000** will be given at a **7 % interest rate without any requirement of mortgage or guarantor.**
- Prisoners can repay the loan from the money earned (Rs. 50-70 as daily wages) while working in various industrial and manufacturing units inside the prison.

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Status Of Undertrial Prisoners In India



HIGHEST SHARE OF UNDERTRIALS IN JAIL

States/UTs	Number	Share
Delhi	14,506	91%
J&K	3,717	91%
Bihar	44,187	85%
Punjab	15,643	85%
Odisha	15,619	83%
All India	3,71,848	76%

- Of the interest the bank earns, 1 % will be given back to the system as a contribution to the Prisoners' Welfare Fund.

❖ Context

- The PM recently underlined that most of the undertrials are poor or from ordinary families & appealed to states to release them on bail wherever possible

❖ Key Highlights Of The NCRB 2020 Data

- Of the total **4,88,511** prison inmates, **3,71,848 (76%)** were found to be **undertrials**. About **27%** of all undertrials were found to be **illiterate**, and **41%** had **dropped out before Class X**. **Muslims** accounted for about **20%** of the total undertrials and 17% of all convicts. **Dalits** accounted for about **21%** of all undertrials and 21% of all convicts. **Tribals** accounted for about **10%** of all undertrials and 14% of all convicts. **OBCs** accounted for about **42%** of the total undertrials and 37% of all convicts. About **30%** of all undertrials **remain in jail for over a year** while **65%** don't get released before **three months**.
- About **50%** of all undertrials were **charged with "offences against human body"**, while **20%** were charged with **"offences against property"**.

Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)



❖ Context

- Recently, **The indigenous Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS)** with the private industry crossed a milestone by successfully completing the validation trials towards meeting the specifications of the Army.

❖ About ATAGS

- It is jointly **developed by Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE)**, the Pune-based laboratory of DRDO, in **partnership with Bharat Forge and Tata Group**. It is the **most consistent and accurate gun in the world**. The **ATAGS is a 155mm, 52-caliber heavy artillery gun**. The ATAGS has demonstrated a **range of over 45 km**.
- It can fire **three rounds in 15 seconds** in burst mode, and as many as **60 rounds in 60 minutes** in sustained mode. It boasts of the **shortest minimum range at high angle** and **fast mobility in desert and mountain terrain** in addition to autonomous mode firing capability and wireless communication.
- It has been **designed to fire all in-service ammunition** with a **fully automatic ammunition handling system** with all electronic drives.

Lapsus\$



❖ Context

- Recently, **authentication platform Okta** confirmed that hackers from the **cyber-crime group Lapsus\$** had tried intruding into its system 3 months earlier

❖ About Lapsus\$

- Lapsus\$ is said to be **based in South America** and is **led by two teenagers**, a 16-year-old and a 17-year-old.
- The group is relatively new but has **successfully breached major firms like Microsoft**. It has also **publicly taunted their victims**, leaking their source code and internal documents. Their **hacking tactics** include phone-based social engineering, SIM-swapping to facilitate account takeover, accessing personal email accounts of employees at target organizations etc.

Operation Satark



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❖ Context

- Recently, the Railway Protection Force has started **"Operation Satark"**.

❖ Key Highlights

- Focused effort under **"Operation Satark"** was launched from **5th April to 30th April 2022**.
- Objective:** To take **action against illicit liquor/FICN/illegal tobacco, products/unaccounted gold/cash/precious items/** any other items being transported through railway network for the **purpose of tax evasion/smuggling/commission of crime/acts of terror**.
- RPF has been **conducting intensive checks in stations, trains and railway area** under "Operation Satark" to thwart the design of such elements.

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