



pravahini

Monthly Compendium (Miscellaneous Topics)

of Current Affairs by **SUCCESS MANTRA** (GTB Nagar)

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

MAY 2022 - SET 01



MISCELLANEOUS

#US REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Recently, 2021 Report on **International Religious Freedom (IRF)** was released by the US Department of State.



- The document is distinct from the IRF report released by the **US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**.
- USCIRF is an **independent, bipartisan federal government entity** while the IRF is part of the US State Department. The former's report holds a statutory obligation.

What is the US Office of International Religious Freedom?

- **History:** In 1998, the then-US President Bill Clinton signed the **International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA, 1998)** into law.
- The Act led to the creation of the Office of International Religious Freedom headed by an Ambassador-at-Large within the State Department of the US government, and the establishment of a **US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)**.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- **World:** Vietnam and Nigeria have been cited as countries where religious expression was being curtailed.
- **Another set of examples of countries with religious freedom restrictions** cited include US ally Saudi Arabia, as well as China, Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- China continues its genocide and repression of predominantly **Muslim Uyghurs** and other religious minority groups.
- In Pakistan, many persons have been accused of **blasphemy**, or sentenced to death by courts in 2021.

What is the State of Freedom of Religion in India?

- Freedom of religion in India is a **fundamental right guaranteed by Article 25-28** of the Constitution of India.
- **Article 25** (Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion).
- **Article 26** (Freedom to manage religious affairs).
- **Article 27** (Freedom as to payment of taxes for promotion of any religion).
- **Article 28** (Freedom as to attendance at religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions).
- Further, **Article 29 and 30 of the Constitution** deal with the protection of interests of minorities.

#RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT BY USCIRF

- Recently, the **US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** has recommended for the **second year in the row to put India on a list (Countries of Particular Concern or CPCs)** for the worst violations of religious freedoms in 2021.
- Earlier, the US State Department released a **strong and critical report on human rights in India in 2021.**

What is USCIRF?

- USCIRF is an **independent, bipartisan US federal government commission**, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- It is an **advisory body to the US Congress.**
- It is **headquartered in Washington DC.**
- Established by the US government in 1998 after the inaction of the International Religious Freedom Act, **recommendations of USCIRF are non-binding on the state department.**
- Traditionally, India does not recognize the view of USCIRF.

What are the Key Highlights of the Report?

- The Report's primary focus is on **two groups of countries:**
- **Country of Particular Concern (CPC):** It is a designation by the **US Secretary of State of a nation engaged in severe violations** of religious freedom under IRFA (**International Religious Freedom Act of 1998**).
- **Special Watch List:** A "**Special Watch List**" country is one that is deemed not to meet all the CPC criteria but engages in or tolerates severe violations of **religious freedom.**

What are the Latest Recommendations of USCIRF?

- **For the CPC List:**
- Other than India, countries recommended for the CPC designation are **Afghanistan, Nigeria, Syria, and Vietnam.**
- Countries recommended for **redesignating include Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan as CPCs.**
- **For A Special Watch List:**
- Algeria, Cuba, and Nicaragua were **placed in 2021.**
- **Others include** Azerbaijan, CAR, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Turkey, and Uzbekistan.

#WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY OBSERVED ON 5TH JUNE

World Environment Day is celebrated on **5th June every year** to encourage awareness and environmental protection.

- On the Occasion, India launched '**Lifestyle for the Environment (LiFE) Movement**'.
- What are the Key Highlights about World Environment Day?



About:

- The **United Nations Assembly** established World Environment Day in 1972, which was the **first day of the Stockholm Conference on the human environment**.
- The celebration of world environment day every year **is done according to a specific theme** and slogan which addresses the major environmental concern of the time.
- It is **hosted by a different country each year**.
- For example, **India hosted the 45th celebration of World Environment Day** under the theme '**Beat Plastic Pollution**'.
- **World Environment Day** celebration last year also kicked off the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)** which is a global mission to revive billions of hectares, from forests to farmlands, from the top of mountains to the depth of the seas.

Theme for 2022: Only One Earth:

- It mirrors the theme of the **first World Environment Day in 1973**.

What is LiFE Movement?

- The idea of LiFE was introduced by India during the **26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)** in Glasgow in 2021.
- The **idea promotes an environmentally conscious lifestyle** that focuses on 'mindful and deliberate utilisation' instead of 'mindless and wasteful consumption'.
- With the launch of the Mission, the prevalent **"use-and-dispose" economy-governed by mindless** and destructive consumption-will be replaced by a **circular economy**, defined by conscious and deliberate consumption.
- **Objective:** The Movement **aims to utilise the power of collective action** and nudge individuals across the world to undertake simple climate-friendly actions in their daily lives.
- It also **seeks to leverage the strength of social networks to influence social norms** surrounding climate.
- The Mission plans to create and nurture a global network of individuals, namely '**Pro-Planet People**' (P3).

What are the Other Related Initiatives?

- **National Afforestation Programme (NAP):** It focuses on the rehabilitation of degraded forests and afforestation around forests.
- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM):** It is under the **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and aimed at improving and increasing tree cover as a climate adaptation and mitigation strategy.
- **National Biodiversity Action Plan:** It has been **launched to implement strategies for the reduction in rates of degradation**, fragmentation and loss of natural habitats.

#RELATED: INDIA JOINED FIRST MOVERS COALITION

- India recently joined a global public-private partnership initiative called the **First Movers Coalition**.
- The initiative was launched by **President of the USA Joe Biden and the World Economic Forum (WEF) at COP26**.
- It was joined by 50 new corporate members with a collective market capitalization of USD 8.5 trillion.



- The **First Movers Coalition** aims to decarbonize the most carbon-intensive sectors such as the heavy industry and long-distance transport sectors, which are responsible for 30% of global emissions.
- It is expected that emissions from these sectors will increase to around 50% by mid-century unless urgent actions are taken on clean technology innovation. The targeted sectors of the **First Movers Coalition** include **aluminum, aviation, chemicals, concrete, shipping, steel, and trucking**.

Which countries joined the coalition and what are their commitments?

- Apart from **India, Denmark, Italy, Japan, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, and the UK** joined the First Movers Coalition as government partners. India, Japan, and Sweden also joined the steering board of the First Movers Coalition.
- The member countries pledged to create early markets **for clean technologies through appropriate policies and engagements with the private sector**.
- They also committed to purchasing a certain percentage from suppliers using zero-carbon solutions, even at a premium cost. If purchases from public and private sectors increase in this decade it will ensure affordability of clean technologies and also ensures long-term transformation.

World Economic Forum

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) is a **Swiss nonprofit foundation established in 1971**, based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Recognized by the Swiss authorities as the international institution for public-private cooperation.
- **Mission:** Committed to **improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society** to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

- **Founder and Executive Chairman:** Klaus Schwab.
- **Some major reports published by WEF are:**
- **Energy Transition Index.**
- **Global Competitiveness Report.**
- **Global IT Report**
- WEF along with INSEAD and Cornell University publishes this report.
- **Global Gender Gap Report.**
- **Global Risk Report.**
- **Global Travel and Tourism Report.**

#4TH STATE FOOD SAFETY INDEX: FSSAI

On the occasion of **World Food Safety Day**, the Union Health Minister released **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**'s 4th **State Food Safety Index (SFSI)** to measure the performance of States across five parameters of food safety.



What is State Food Safety Index (SFSI)?

- **About:** SFSI was started from 2018-19 with the aim of creating a **competitive and positive change** in the food safety ecosystem in the country.
- The index is developed by **FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India)** to measure the performance of states on five significant parameters of Food Safety.
- The **parameters include Human Resources and Institutional Data, Compliance, Food Testing – Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training & Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment.**
- The **Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model** that provides an objective framework for evaluating food safety across all States/UTs.
- The **first State Food Safety Index for the year 2018-19** was announced on the first-ever **World Food Safety Day** on 7th June 2019.

How did the States Perform?

- **Overall: Tamil Nadu topped** the State Food Safety Index followed by **Gujarat and Maharashtra.**
- **Among Smaller States:** Goa stood first, followed by Manipur and Sikkim.
- **Among UTs:** Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Chandigarh secured first, second and third ranks.

What is Food Safety Day?

- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** jointly facilitate the observance of World Food Safety Day, in collaboration with Member States and other relevant organizations.
- It was **first celebrated in 2019, to strengthen the commitment to scale up food safety** made by the Addis Ababa Conference and the Geneva Forum in 2019 under the umbrella of **“The Future of Food Safety”**.

- The theme for 2022 was Safer Food, Better Health.

#WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY: 7TH JUNE

Every Year, 7th June is observed as **World Food Safety Day**.

What are the Key Highlights of World Food Safety Day?



- **About:** The **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** jointly facilitate the observance of World Food Safety Day, in collaboration with Member States and other relevant organizations.
- It was **first celebrated in 2019**, to strengthen the commitment to scale up food safety made by the Addis Ababa Conference and the Geneva Forum in 2019 under the umbrella of **"The Future of Food Safety"**.
- **2022 Theme:** Safer Food, Better Health

What are the Related Initiatives?

- **Global:** The **Codex Alimentarius**, or "Food Code" is a collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice adopted by the **Codex Alimentarius Commission**.
- The **Codex Alimentarius Commission** is a **joint intergovernmental body** of the Food and Agriculture Organization and World Health Organization.
- Currently, it has **189 members and India is a member**.

State Food Safety Index:

- FSSAI has developed the **State Food Safety Index (SFSI)** to measure the performance of States on five parameters of food safety.
- The **parameters include** Human Resources and Institutional Arrangements, Compliance, Food Testing-Infrastructure and Surveillance, Training and Capacity Building and Consumer Empowerment.
- **Eat Right India Movement:** It is an **initiative of the Government of India and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** to transform the country's food system in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians.
- Eat Right India is aligned to the **National Health Policy 2017**, with its focus on preventive and promotive healthcare and flagship programmes like **Ayushman Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukt Bharat and Swachh Bharat Mission**.
- **Eat Right Awards:** FSSAI has instituted the **'Eat Right Awards'** to recognize the contribution of food companies and individuals to empower citizens to choose safe and healthy food options, which would help improve their health and well-being.
- **Eat Right Mela:** Organised by FSSAI, it is an **outreach activity for citizens to nudge them towards eating right**. It is organised to make citizens aware of the health and nutrition benefits of different types of food.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- The Food and Agriculture Organization is an **agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

- FAO is also a source of knowledge and information and helps developing countries and countries in transition modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security for all.
- **Formation: 16 October 1945, in Quebec City, Canada**
- **Headquarters: Rome, Italy**
- Every year, **World Food Day (Theme for 2018- Zero Hunger) is celebrated on October 16** to commemorate the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nations in the year 1945.
- The **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-2)** also aims to “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” by 2030.

REALTED: WORLD FOOD DAY

- **World Food Day** is celebrated every year on **October 16th** to commemorate the date of the founding of the **United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation** in 1945.
- **FAO** is a **specialised agency of the UN** that leads international efforts to **defeat hunger**.
- In **2021**, the UN Secretary-General also convened the very first **Food Systems Summit** to discuss ways to transform the production and consumption of food.
- **About:** It is observed annually to **address the problem of global hunger**.
- The day is also observed by organisations like **World Food Programme** (Was awarded **nobel peace prize 2020**) and **International Fund for Agricultural Development**.
- It emphasises on the **Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2)** i.e. Zero Hunger.

FAO's Contribution in India:

- It has closely watched India's fight against **malnutrition** in the past decades but its scope had many constraints.
- Due to reasons such as pregnancy at a young age, lack of education and information, inadequate access to drinking water, lack of cleanliness, etc. **India is lagging behind in achieving the expected results of “malnutrition free India” by 2022**, envisaged under the National Nutrition Mission (**POSHAN Abhiyaan**).
- FAO supported India's proposal to declare 2023 as the **International Year of Millets**.
- The move will **encourage intake of nutritious food, increase their availability further and benefit small and medium farmers** who mostly grow coarse grains on their land where there is a problem of water and the land is not so fertile.
- **FAO's Hunger Index, India's Opposition and Farmers Protest:**
- India has slipped to 101st position in the **Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021**.
- However, the **Indian government has questioned the poll-based assessment and methodology** used by the FAO.

#2022 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI)

- **Environmental Performance Index (EPI) was released recently, ranking 180 countries** on 40 performance indicators in 11 issue categories of climate change performance, ecosystem vitality and environmental health.
- In the index, **India has been ranked at 180th position, bottom of the 2022 Index.**
- India has **scored lowest among 180 countries.** The index measured the environmental performance of all the 180 countries.



India's score

- In the Index, India scored 18.9 and has been ranked last. In last decade, performance of India has decreased by 0.6 scores.
- Three primary categories in which countries were given scores are ecosystem vitality, **environmental health and climate change performance. India scored 19.3 on the ecosystem vitality of the index.**
- It scored 12.5 on health, which means poor air quality, poor drinking water and poor sanitation. India's waste management with respect to solid wastes, ocean plastics, and recycling is also poor.

Rank of other countries

- Neighbouring countries of India have scored slightly better. **Pakistan has been ranked at 176th position while Bangladesh at 177.**

How was the report prepared?

- **According to the report**, the countries are scored and ranked in the 2022 Index based on environmental performance. It **made use of available data from recent year.**
- The scores are calculated for observing how countries have improved or changed as compared to previous years. Analysis of the environmental performance of these countries for the Index is being done by the researchers at **Columbia University and Earth Institute of Yale.**

Top 5 Countries

- In the Index 2022, Denmark has been ranked 1st with EPI score of 77.90. It is followed by United Kingdom with score of 77.70. Finland is ranked 3rd, followed by Malta and Sweden.

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- **Theme for 2022: OnlyOneEarth:**
- It mirrors the theme of the **first World Environment Day in 1973**.

#QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2023

Recently, QS World University Ranking 2023 was released.

What is QS World University Rankings?

- **Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)** a leading global career and education **network** for ambitious professionals looking to further their personal and professional development.
- QS Develops and successfully implements methods of comparative data collection and analysis used to highlight institutions' strengths.
- The 'QS World University Rankings' is an **annual publication** of university rankings which comprises the global overall and subject rankings.
- **Six parameters** and their weightage for the evaluation:
 - Academic Reputation (40%)
 - Employer Reputation (10%)
 - Faculty/Student Ratio (20%)
 - Citations per faculty (20%)
 - International Faculty Ratio (5%)
 - International Student Ratio (5%)



What are Key Highlights of the Report?

- **Global Rankings:**
- **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)** of the US is the top university for the **11th consecutive year**.
- The second place went to the **University of Cambridge**, followed by **Stanford University**

Indian Institutions:

- The Indian Institute Science (IISc) was ranked highest followed by IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi. The total number of Indian institutes among the top 1,000 globally has **risen to 27 from 22**.

- **IISc Bengaluru** is the **world's top research university**, achieving a perfect score of 100/100 for this metric.
- Furthermore, **IISc Bengaluru** is the **fastest rising South Asian university** among the QS World University Rankings top-200.
- Overall, Indian education institutes, **41 of which made it to the rankings, have performed poorly across many key metrics.**
- For instance, 30 out of 41 ranked universities have suffered declines in the Faculty Student Ratio (FSR) indicator, with only four recording improvements.
- The report shows that India's presence in the top 500 category is also IIT-driven like other IITs around the world.
- Apart from IISc, eight IITs (Delhi, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Roorkee, Guwahati, Indore) are ranked among the top 500 globally.
- **No other Indian university, public or private, has found a place** in the top 500 category globally, since the launch of the Institute of Eminence scheme.

What are the Related Indian Initiatives?

- **Institutions of Eminence (IoE) Scheme:**
- It is a government's scheme to provide the **regulatory architecture for setting up or upgrading of 20 Institutions** (10 from public sector and 10 from the private sector) as world-class teaching and research institutions called 'Institutions of Eminence'.
- **National Education Policy, 2020:**
- It aims to introduce several changes in the Indian education system - from the school to college level and **make India a global knowledge superpower.**
- **Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT):**
- It is a first-of-its-kind Pan-IIT and IISc joint initiative to **develop a new education policy and a roadmap for research to solve major engineering and technology challenges** that India must address and champion to enable, empower and embolden the nation for inclusive growth and self-reliance.
- **Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana (UAY):**
- It was announced with a view to promote innovation of a higher order that directly impacts the needs of the Industry and thereby improves the competitive edge of Indian manufacturing.

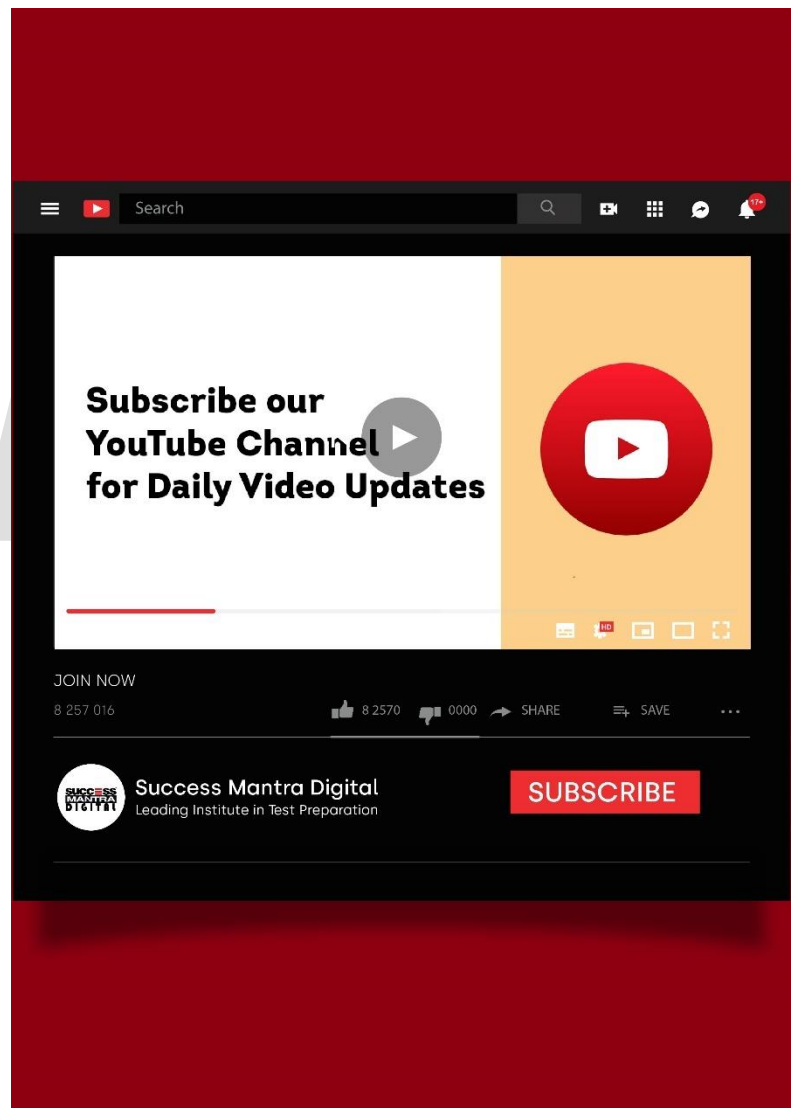
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