Editorial Summary

National Mission for Clean Ganga

Context

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has granted Tax Exemption to National Mission for Clean Ganga.

About National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- It is registered as an **authority** under **the Ministry of Jal Shakti**, (GOI).
- It acted as the implementation arm of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA), which was constituted under **Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986.**
- **NGRBA** was dissolved on 7th October 2016 and was replaced by the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred to as National Ganga Council).
- **Aim of NMCG:**
  - To ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the river Ganga
  - To maintain minimum ecological flows in the river Ganga with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.
- **Legal Provision**:
  - NMCG is now notified under **Clause 46A of Section 10** of the **Income Tax Act, 1961**.
  - Clause 46A allows **income tax exemption** to bodies, authorities, boards, trusts or commissions established under Central/State Acts for specific purposes.

National Ganga Council
- It replaced the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA).
- **Chairman:** Prime Minister.
- **Members:** Chief Ministers of **five Ganga basin states Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal** along with some Union Ministers.
- It is tasked with the responsibilities for the supervision of pollution prevention and rejuvenation of River Ganga Basin, including Ganga and its tributaries.
- It is formed under the **Environment Protection Act (EPA 1986).**

Source:
- **Indian Express - NMCG**

Red-crowned roofed turtles

Context
Recently 20 red-crowned roofed turtles were re-introduced in the river Ganga in Uttar Pradesh.

About Red crowned roofed turtles
- It is a freshwater turtle species, and found in deep flowing rivers with terrestrial nesting sites.
- It prefers **clean, unpolluted river ecosystems** with abundant aquatic vegetation
- It is **native to India**, **Nepal** and **Bangladesh.**
- Acts as a **bioindicator** of freshwater river ecosystem health.
- **Current confirmed habitat in the wild:** Chambal River (Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary)
- **Physical Characteristics:**
    - The size of males is much smaller (around half the size of females).
    - Males develop **bright red coloration** on the crown during the breeding season.
    - It has a **strongly keeled Carpace.**
- **Conservation Status:**
    - **IUCN :** Critically Endangered
    - **CITES :** Appendix I
- **Major threats:** Habitat loss, Drowning in illegal fishing nets,Sand Mining, Poaching, etc.

Source:
- **Hindustan Times - Red crown turtle**

Greenhouse Gases Emissions Intensity (GEI) Target Rules, 2025

Context
The Union government has notified draft Rules introducing targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by "obligated entities" in energy-intensive sectors and industries.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions Intensity (GEI)
- **GHGs** are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to the "greenhouse effect" that raises surface temperature on Earth.
- GEI refers to the amount of GHGs **emitted per unit of product output.**
- **It is measured in**: **tCO2e** (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent).
    - It accounts for all greenhouse gases based on their global warming potential.
- **GHGs include**:
    - **Natural:** Water vapour, carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), ozone (O3).
    - **Synthetic:** Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs).

Key Provisions of the Draft GEI Target Rules
- **Baseline Year:** 2023-24.
- **Reduction Targets Set for**: 2025-26 and 2026-27.
- **Coverage**: Highly energy-intensive sectors.
- **Industries covered**: 282 industrial units across 4 sectors.
- **Compliance and Penalties:**
    - Industries must meet the assigned GEI reduction targets.
    - Penalties will apply for **non-compliance**.
    - Rules will be enforced by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.
- **How GEI targets will help industries:**
    - Industries will clearly know how much they need to cut emissions.
    - Industries achieving reductions can **earn carbon credits.**
    - Carbon credits can be sold to other industries or used to meet their own obligations.
- **Importance of Setting GEI Targets:**
    - GEI targets will push industries towards **low-carbon growth**.
    - **It will support the Paris Agreement Commitment**. India aims to reduce emissions intensity of **GDP by 45%** by **2030** (compared to 2005 levels).
    - Industries will adopt Cleaner fuels (e.g., switching from coal to biomass) & Energy-efficient manufacturing processes.

Carbon Trading Mechanism in India
- **Platform:** Indian Carbon Market platform.
- **Oversight**: Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power.
- **Incentive**:
    - Industries with clean technologies can earn and trade carbon credits for profit.
    - Others can **gradually transition** by buying credits.

Source:
- **Indian Express - Emission Intensity Targets**

National Supercomputing Mission

Context
The National Supercomputing Mission has completed **10 years** of its launch.

About National Super Computing Mission (NSM)
- It is a joint initiative of the **Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- NSM was launched in **2015.**
- Its primary goal is to enhance India's supercomputing capabilities and make it a global leader in this field.
- **Implementing Agencies:**
  - Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune
  - Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru
- **Key aspects of the Mission:**
  - **Building supercomputing infrastructure:** The mission aims to create a grid of over **70** supercomputing systems across the country.
  - **Connecting academic and research institutions:** These supercomputers are connected to the **National Knowledge Network (NKN)**, allowing researchers and institutions to access them.
  - **Human resource development:** Training programs to develop a skilled workforce in high-performance computing.
  - **Indigenous development:** Design, manufacturing and development of supercomputing components within India.

Key Supercomputer deployed under the Mission
- **PARAM Shivay (2019) -** Installed at **IIT BHU, Varanasi**.
  - First indigenously built supercomputer under NSM.
- **PARAM Pravega (2022)-** Installed at **IISc Bengaluru**
  - **Power:** 3.3 Petaflops.
  - **Largest academic supercomputer** in India.
- **PARAM Rudra (2024) -** Installed at **C-DAC Pune, Delhi, and Kolkata.**
  - Used for: Physics, Earth Sciences, Cosmology.
  - Built using: **"Rudra" HPC servers** (India's first indigenously built server class at global standards)
- **Trinetra** – India's Indigenous HPC Network.
  - **Developer:** C-DAC.
  - **Purpose:** High-speed data transfer between supercomputing nodes.
- **AIRAWAT** – AI Supercomputing Infrastructure.
  - Ranked **75th in the Top 500 Global Supercomputers.**

Source:
- **PIB - NSM**

Trends in World Military Expenditure – 2024
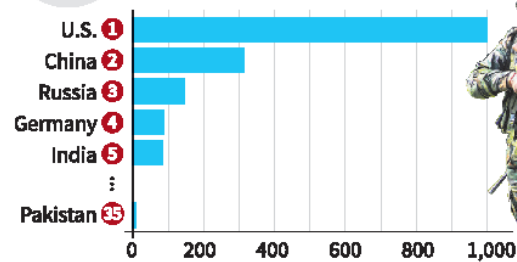
Context

According to a latest report by SIPRI India's military spending in 2024 was nearly nine times that of Pakistan's expenditure.

Global Military Spending: Key Highlights

- **Total Global Military Spending (2024):** $2,743 billion
- **Share of Top 5 Countries:** USA, China, Russia, Germany & India.
  - Accounted for **60%** of global spending.
  - Combined expenditure: **$1,635 billion.**
- **India's Military Expenditure – 2024:**
  - **Global Rank -** 5th
  - **Growth Rate -** +1.6% (compared to 2023)
  - **Comparison with Pakistan -** Nearly **9 times** Pakistan's military spending.

The chart shows the top military spenders (in $ billion) in the world in 2024. Pakistan was ranked 35 among the spenders

Arms full

Rank	Country
❶	U.S.
❷	China
❸	Russia
❹	Germany
❺	India
㉟	Pakistan

0 200 400 600 800 1,000

Source : SIPRI

India's Arms Imports

- India's **largest supplier** remained **Russia**, but its share **declined to 36%** (from **55% in 2015-19** and **72% in 2010-14**).
- India was the **biggest export destination** for both **Russia and France** in 2020-24.
- **France** emerged as a key supplier, with **India accounting for 28% of French arms exports**.
- **Major Indian arms deals with France**:
  - 36 Rafale fighter jets
  - 6 Scorpene-class submarines
  - Upcoming deals: 26 Rafale-M jets and 3 more submarines.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- It is a globally renowned institute dedicated to research on conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was founded in **1966**. It is based in **Stockholm.**
- SIPRI provides critical data and analysis on global security issues, particularly related to military expenditures and the arms trade in its **Yearly Book.**

Source:
- **The Hindu - SIPRI**

News in short

SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme

- India has suspended SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme for Pakistani Nationals After Pahalgam Terror Attack.

About SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES)
- SVEC is a regional travel facilitation mechanism which allows select individuals from SAARC nations to travel visa-free across member countries using a **SAARC Visa Exemption Sticker issued by their home country**.
- It was launched in 1992.
- It originated from the **4th SAARC** Summit held in **Islamabad in December 1988.**
- **Validity**: Generally **for one year**.
- **Eligible Categories:** Covers 24 specific categories such as dignitaries, judges, MPs, senior officials, journalists, sports persons, business leaders etc.
- **SAARC Member Countries:** India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives.

Source:
- **The Hindu - SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme**

AI Kiran Initiative

- It is a national movement to **promote women's leadership** in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning in India.
- It aims to create a **vibrant and inclusive ecosystem** where women can become innovators, changemakers and leaders in the field, addressing the gender disparity in AI.
- The initiative is co-led by the **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA), Verix and INK Women.**

Source:
- **NDTV - AI Kiran**

AIM4NatuRe

- Recently the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) launched the AIM4NatuRe initiative on the occasion of Earth day.

About AIM4NatuRe
- It stands for Accelerating Innovative Monitoring for Nature Restoration.
- It is an innovative initiative that will **leverage technology and data to enhance nature restoration.**
- It will complement FAO's existing **AIM4Forests programme** and enable the creation of a global dataset on nature restoration progress.
- Countries will receive support to build capacity and use the latest technology to monitor and report their progress towards target 2 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).
- **Target: Restore at least 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030**.

About FAO
- FAO is a specialised agency of the United Nations focusing on international efforts to defeat hunger.

- It was established in **1945. (HQ- Rome)**
- **Sister organisations of FAO:** World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- **Important Initiatives:**
  - Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)
  - Overseeing the Codex Alimentarius Commission for food standards
  - Adoption of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (2001).

Source:
- **FAO - AIM4NatuRe**

Bonobos and Female Dominance

- According to a recent study, bonobo societies are female-dominated, which is extremely rare among mammals.

About Bonobos
- Bonobos, also known as the pygmy chimpanzee, are part of the great ape family and were the last member to be discovered.
- Earlier they were considered as **subspecies of chimpanzees. In 1933,** they were officially recognised as a separate species.
- **Closest Relatives**: Humans and chimpanzees (share ~99% DNA with humans)
- **Geographic Range**: *Endemic to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC),* Central Africa.
- **Social Structure:**
  - **Matriarchal society**- Female-led groups.
  - **Female alliances** dominate males.High degree of **cooperation** and **conflict resolution via social bonding.**
  - Use of **sexual behaviors** for stress relief, bonding, and conflict mitigation.
- **IUCN Status:** Endangered.

Source:
- **Indian Express - Bonobos**

Editorial Summary

The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional

Context
The 18th Lok Sabha has yet to elect a Deputy Speaker.

More in News
- Also, the Deputy Speaker's office has **remained vacant for the entire term** of the **17th Lok Sabha (2019–2024)**.

Constitutional Provisions for Deputy Speaker
- **Article 93:** It says that the **House of the People** shall, **as soon as may be,** choose two members to be the Speaker and Deputy Speaker and, so often as the office of Speaker or Deputy Speaker becomes vacant, the House shall choose another member.
- **Article 178:** It contains the corresponding position for **Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of a State.**
- **Article 94:** Article 94 provides for **vacation/resignation/removal of Speaker or Deputy Speaker** of the House of the People.
  - Under it, the Speaker or Deputy Speaker shall **vacate his office** if he ceases to be a member of the House.
  - They may also **resign to each other**, or may be **removed** from office by **a resolution** of the House of the People passed by a **majority of all the then members of the House**.
  - **Article 179** provides similar provisions for State Assemblies.

Rules for Election of Deputy Speaker
- **Convention**: The practice in both **Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies** has been to elect the Speaker during the first session of the new House.
  - The **election of the Deputy Speaker** usually takes place in the **second session.**
    - It is generally not delayed further in the absence of genuine and unavoidable constraints.
    - It has been usual practice to offer the **post of Deputy Speaker to the Opposition (since 10th Lok Sabha).**
- **Rule 8:** Rule 8 of The Rules of Procedure and Conduct in Lok Sabha says that **the election of Deputy Speaker** shall be held on **such date as the Speaker may fix**.
  - The Deputy Speaker is elected once a motion proposing his name is carried in the House.
- **Mandatory Election:** Both Articles 93 and 178 use the word **"shall",** indicating that the **election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker is mandatory under the Constitution.**
- **Time Frame**: There is **no specific time frame mentioned in the Constitution** for the election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker. All that the Constitution says is the election must be held as soon as possible.
- **Tenure**: Once elected, the **Deputy Speaker usually continues in office for the entire duration of the House.**

To Remember
- When the **Offices of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker fall vacant**, the duties of the Office of the Speaker are performed by such Member of the Lok Sabha as the President may appoint for the purpose.
  - The person so appointed is known as the **Speaker *pro tem.***

Powers and Functions of Deputy Speaker

- **Article 95(1)**: According to it, while the office of **Speaker is vacant**, the **duties of the office shall be performed by the Deputy Speaker.**
- **Same Powers as Speaker**: In general, the **Deputy Speaker has the same powers as the Speaker** when presiding over a sitting of the House.
  - All **references to the Speaker** in the Rules **are deemed to be references to the Deputy Speaker** when he presides.
- **Independent of Speaker:** The Deputy Speaker is **independent of the Speaker**, **not subordinate to him**, as both are elected from among the members of the House.
- **Appeal:** It has been held that **no appeal lies to the Speaker against a ruling given by the Deputy Speaker** or any person presiding over the House in the absence of the Speaker.
- **Ensures Continuity:** The **Deputy Speaker ensures the continuity of the Speakers office by acting as the Speaker when the office becomes vacant** by death or because of resignation.
- **Presides During Discussion of Speaker's Removal:** When a **resolution for removal of the Speaker** is up for discussion, the Constitution specifies that the **Deputy Speaker presides over the proceedings of the House.**
- **Special Privilege**: One of his special privileges as Deputy Speaker is that when he is appointed as a **member of a Parliamentary Committee, he automatically becomes its Chairman**.

Can Courts Intervene in Case of Delay in Electing the Deputy Speaker?

- In 2021, a petition was filed before the Delhi High Court, which argued that delay in the election of the Deputy Speaker **violated Article 93**.
  - However, there is **no precedent of a court forcing the legislature to elect the Deputy Speaker.**
- Courts usually **don't intervene in the procedural conduct of Parliament**.
- **According to Article 122(1),** the validity of any proceedings in Parliament shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure.
- However, the courts do have jurisdiction to at **least inquire into why there has been no election to the post of Deputy Speaker** since the Constitution does envisage an election "as soon as may be".

Need for Legislative Reform: Election of Deputy Speaker

- **Undermining of Democratic Norms:** The continued vacancy **violates the spirit of the Constitution** and **weakens parliamentary checks and balances**, especially in the Speaker's absence.
- **Need for Time-Bound Mechanism:** A **mandatory time frame**, such as **within 60 days** of the first sitting of a new Lok Sabha, would ensure the prompt election and uphold legislative integrity.
- **Statutory or Constitutional Route:** Reform can be brought through:
  - **Constitutional Amendment** to make Article 93 time-bound, or
  - **Statutory Law** enabling the President to initiate the process upon the advice of the PM or Speaker.
- **Reinforcing Constitutional Morality:** Timely election is a **test of Parliament's commitment to rule-based governance**. Ignoring this reflects poorly on institutional integrity.

Source: The Hindu: The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional

India's urban future is at a crossroads

Context

As summer intensifies, Indian cities are struggling with water shortages and rising electricity demand and temperatures.

Challenges of Urbanisation in India

- **Climate Vulnerability and Resource Stress:** Increasing **temperatures and water scarcity**, as seen in cities like Bengaluru and Hyderabad, indicate poor climate resilience.
  - High electricity demand leads to power cuts, especially during heatwaves.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Urbanisation contributes to rising **pollution, congestion, and urban heat island effects**.
  - Sustainability is often compromised due to poor waste management and environmental planning.
- **Lack of Inclusive Development:** Urban growth often excludes the poor; nearly **one-third of city dwellers are poor**, yet Census 2011 data underestimates urban poverty.
  - Cities like Jaipur rank low on inclusivity due to weak social and economic participation mechanisms.
- **Deficient Disaster and Climate Resilience:** Few cities have official **resilience or sustainability plans**; disaster preparedness remains weak.
  - Gaps in data and planning hinder effective response to climate shocks.
- **Weak Urban Governance and Data Deficits:** Lack of real-time and granular data at the **Urban Local Body (ULB)** level restricts evidence-based planning.
  - Existing indices (e.g., NITI Aayog's SDG-11 framework) lack depth and fail to reflect ground realities.
- **Safety and Security Concerns:** Urban safety is uneven — while Bengaluru ranks high, cities like Kolkata lag due to weaker crime prevention mechanisms.

What Needs to Be Done?

- **Develop Robust City-Level Indices for SDG-11:** Move beyond limited indicators and include **climate resilience, sustainability, inclusivity, and safety** in city evaluations.
  - Use techniques like **Shannon Entropy Weighting** for objective index creation.
- **Strengthen Urban Local Governance:** Empower **Urban Local Bodies** to track SDG progress using real-time data from **Smart City ICCCs**.
  - Decentralise planning with **city-specific strategies**.
- **Update Urban Poverty Data Regularly:** Conduct a **periodic Urban Poor Quality of Living Survey** to accurately measure and address poverty and inequality.
- **Focus on Environmental and Climate Planning:** Enforce city-level **resilience and sustainability plans**.
  - Ensure policies for **disaster preparedness, waste management**, and **climate adaptation** are implemented and monitored.
- **Enhance Urban Safety Infrastructure:** Invest in urban policing, surveillance, and crime prevention, especially in cities lagging on safety metrics.
- **Promote Equitable and Inclusive Urban Development:** Design urban policies that prioritise **affordable housing, inclusive mobility**, and **access to basic services** for all.

Source: The Hindu: India's urban future is at a crossroads

Detailed Coverage

Freedom Of Press

Context

In India, more people believe that media is free than those who consider media freedom to be important.

Importance of Journalists

- **Voice for the Voiceless:** Journalists bring to light "unseen and unheard" stories from marginalized and local communities.
  - They raise issues of deprivation, suffering, and corruption, giving a platform to the struggles of the underprivileged.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Investigative journalism ensures checks and balances by exposing corruption and malpractice in developmental projects and welfare schemes.
  - Acts as a watchdog of democracy, holding powerful entities accountable.
- **Local Relevance and Community Impact:** Grassroots journalists report on local issues, civic problems, and developmental challenges, often ignored by mainstream media.
  - They bridge the gap between policymakers and the grassroots.
- **Enabler of Regional Language Journalism:** Stringers and retainers play a crucial role in providing content for regional and local media outlets, ensuring diversity in news coverage.
- **Empowerment through Independent Journalism:** Independent platforms like social media, YouTube, and digital news sites amplify investigative stories, reaching a broader audience.
  - These platforms help bypass the limitations of mainstream media influenced by advertisers and state alignments.
- **Strengthening Democracy:** By uncovering the abuse of power and fostering an informed citizenry, journalists reinforce democratic institutions and processes.

Institutions for Protecting Press Freedom in India

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Constitution**
  - **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression, which forms the basis for press freedom.
  - **Article 19(2):** Allows reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech for issues such as sovereignty, public order, and morality.
- **Judiciary:** Courts play a critical role in interpreting laws and protecting press freedom against arbitrary restrictions.
  - Landmark cases like *R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu* (1994) affirm the right to publish without prior restraint.
- **Parliament and State Legislatures:** Responsible for enacting laws to protect press freedom and ensuring that any restrictions are reasonable and justifiable.

Government and Regulatory Bodies

- **Press Council of India (PCI):** A statutory body established under the Press Council Act, 1978.
  - Promotes press ethics, prevents undue interference, and investigates complaints related to press freedom violations.
  - Limited to print media, and its recommendations are advisory, not enforceable.
- **Information and Broadcasting Ministry (I&B Ministry):** Regulates broadcast media, including television and radio.
  - Ensures adherence to content standards and oversees licensing for channels.

- **Cyber Crime Cells:** Protect journalists against online harassment and abuse, which have become common threats in digital journalism.

Law Enforcement and Oversight Bodies
- **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC):** Addresses cases where journalists' rights are violated, ensuring protection against state excesses.
- **State Human Rights Commissions (SHRCs):** Operates at the state level to address localized violations against journalists.
- **Law Enforcement Agencies:** Police and investigative agencies are tasked with protecting journalists and investigating crimes against them, including threats and attacks.

Civil Society
- **Media Associations:** Organizations like the **Editors Guild of India, Indian Women's Press Corps**, and others advocate for press freedom and raise concerns about threats to journalists.
- **Civil Society Groups:** Groups such as the **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Reporters Without Borders** monitor press freedom violations and provide global visibility to cases of persecution.
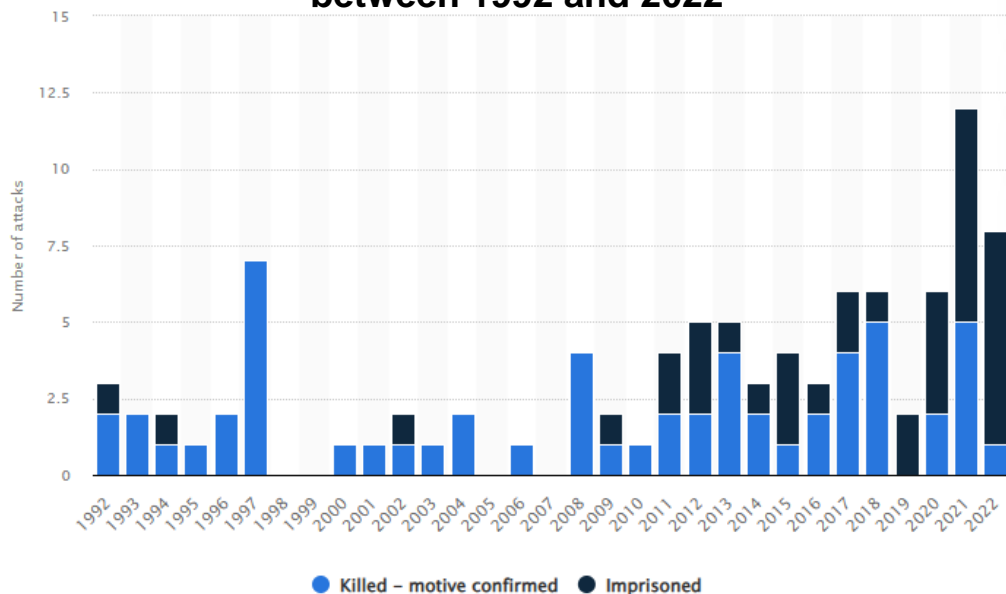
International Frameworks
- **UNESCO:** Promotes press freedom through global campaigns and guidelines.
  - Observes *World Press Freedom Day* annually on May 3 to raise awareness.
- **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):** Monitors violations of press freedom globally and pressures governments to uphold journalistic rights.
- **Global Index Monitoring:** *Reporters Without Borders* publishes the World Press Freedom Index, evaluating India's performance and highlighting areas for improvement.

Challenges or Threats Faced by Journalists

- **Physical Threats and Violence:** Journalists face threats, attacks, and even murder, as seen in the cases of Mukesh Chandrakar and Umesh Dobhal.
  - They are targeted for exposing the nexus of politicians, contractors, and criminals.
- **Low Emphasis on Press Freedom:** Only **68%** of Indians (according to the latest survey by the Pew Research Center) said it is important for media to function **without government censorship** — **second lowest** among 35 countries.
  - This indicates a **relatively low public demand** for independent journalism as a systemic solution to misinformation.

Number of journalists attacked in India between 1992 and 2022

Killed – motive confirmed ● Imprisoned

- **Weak Legal Protections:** Despite laws like the Chhattisgarh Protection of Media Persons Act, enforcement is poor, leaving journalists vulnerable.
  - Legal mechanisms often fail to deter violence against journalists.
- **Precarious Working Conditions:** Many journalists work without job security, receive meager salaries, and face hostile work environments.
  - Lack of institutional support makes them easy targets for intimidation.
- **Political and Economic Pressure:** Media houses face pressure from advertisers, local administrations, and state governments, reducing space for critical reporting.
  - Journalists are often forced into self-censorship due to these influences.
- **Online Harassment and Surveillance:** Independent journalists using digital platforms face trolling, abuse, and sometimes digital surveillance.
  - This adds to their physical and mental stress.
- **Impunity for Attackers:** Attackers of journalists often go unpunished, fostering a culture of fear and discouraging investigative reporting.
- **Lack of Recognition and Support:** Grassroots journalists rarely receive credit for their contributions, making them feel isolated and undervalued.
- **Decline in Press Freedom:** Increased state control and alignment of media outlets with vested interests undermine journalistic independence.
  - **E.g.,** India ranked **159 out of 180** countries in the **2024 World Press Freedom Index** by Reporters Without Borders.

Strategies to Revamp Press Freedom in India

- **Implement Recommendations of Expert Committees:** Adopt suggestions from bodies like the Justice J.S. Verma Committee (2012), Press Council of India, and National Human Rights Commission.
  - Focus areas include ethics training for journalists, institutional transparency, and legal safeguards for constitutional press freedoms.
- **Strengthen the Legal Framework:** While Article 19(1)(a) guarantees freedom of speech and expression, **additional legal provisions** are needed to protect journalists from **harassment, threats, and violence**.
  - The Supreme Court (2017) reinforced that free speech is vital for truth and democracy.
- **Establish Independent Media Regulatory Bodies:** Create **autonomous and impartial regulatory authorities** to oversee media practices.
  - Ensure **transparent appointments**, adequate funding, and public trust in their functioning.
- **Ensure Protection for Journalists and Whistleblowers:** Strengthen protection laws like the **Whistleblowers Protection Act, 2014**, especially for those reporting sensitive or controversial matters.
  - Encourage fearless investigative journalism through **legal and institutional safeguards**.
- **Combat Online Threats and Misinformation:** Address cyberbullying, online abuse, and **fake news**, particularly on digital platforms.
  - The **NBDA's 2022 initiative** is a step in this direction, focusing on protecting journalists — especially women — from online harassment.
- **Promote Media Literacy and Ethics Training:** Implement regular training programs for journalists to **enhance media ethics and accountability**.
  - Encourage ethical reporting and public trust through **transparent media practices**.
- **Foster International Cooperation:** Collaborate with global institutions to adopt best practices and gain international support.
  - Engage actively in platforms like **UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC)** to promote freedom of expression.

Source: [The Hindu: Indians fear fake news but are less concerned about press freedom](#)