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World Press Freedom Index

World Press Freedom Index for the year 2018 has been released.

About the Index:

Published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the World Press Freedom Index is an important advocacy tool based on the principle of emulation between states.

Parameters of Measurement:

The Index ranks 180 countries according to the level of freedom available to journalists and pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country.

It does not rank public policies even if governments obviously have a major impact on their country's ranking. Nor is it an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country.

Press freedom map:

The press freedom map, which is distributed in print and digital versions, offers a visual overview of the situation in each country in the Index. The colour categories are assigned as follows: good (white), fairly good (yellow), problematic (yellow), bad (red) and very bad (black).

Press Freedom Index 2018- Highlights:

- In this year's index, Norway is first for the second year running, followed — as it was last year — by Sweden.
- India has dropped from rank 136 last year to rank 138 this year. India fared poorly on indicators such as hate speeches, attacks on journalists on social media, trolling them and targeting their reputation.
- SAARC nations: Afghanistan (118), Bhutan (94), Nepal (106), the Maldives (120), and Sri Lanka (131), all performed better than India; with Pakistan (139) and Bangladesh (146) performing worse.
- North Korea continues to rank last.

First Woman Lawyer to be Appointed As Supreme Court Judge:

Senior lawyer Indu Malhotra will be the first woman lawyer to be directly appointed as a Supreme Court judge.

Key facts:

Of the top court's 24 judges, only one is a woman, Justice R Banumathi. She was elevated to the top court in August 2014. Justice Banumathi was the sixth woman to become a Supreme Court judge. Justice Fathima Beevi was the first in 1989

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Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The four-day Asia Pacific Regional Workshop of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), jointly hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and UNCCD Secretariat, to build the capacity of the Asia-Pacific Region to monitor and report on land degradation, concluded here today.

Earlier this week, Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MOEFCC) and Chair of the workshop's inaugural session, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, had highlighted the Government's commitment to the land agenda and also released the report on Study of Economics of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (EDLDD) conducted by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and commissioned by MoEFCC.

Highlights of Report:

The report has highlighted that Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) factors had cost India about 2.54% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014-15.

The four-day Workshop (April 24-27, 2018) trained the participants in the use of an innovative land degradation monitoring tool by Conservation International, for the reporting process of UNCCD.

This can significantly increase access to large amounts of Earth observation data and make it available in a comprehensible form for decision-makers at national and state level, thereby contributing to achieving the objectives underlined in the Convention.

About UNCCD:

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding international agreement on land issues.

The Convention promotes good land stewardship. Its 197 Parties aim, through partnerships, to implement the Convention and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

The end goal is to protect land from over-use and drought, so it can continue to provide food, water and energy. By sustainably managing land and striving to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality, now and in the future, not only will the impact of climate change be reduced, but a conflict over natural resources will be avoided.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal Ministry for this Convention, as well as the other two Rio Conventions - United Nations Framework Convention to Combat Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, having their genesis in the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

NAG Missiles:

Why in News?

The Defence Ministry on Friday approved military procurement worth Rs. 3,687 crore, which includes anti-tank guided missile NAG for the Army and long-range guns for the Navy.

The proposals were cleared at a meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) chaired by Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

About NAG:

- The third-generation Fire and Forget ATGM Nag is equipped with many advanced technologies including IIR Seeker with integrated avionics, a capability possessed by few nations in the world.
- The missile is developed to support both mechanised infantry and airborne forces of the Indian Army.
- The missile incorporates an advanced passive homing guidance system and possesses high single-shot kill probability.
- It is designed to destroy modern main battle tanks and other heavily armoured targets.

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) bulletproof jacket

The Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) has developed a next-generation bulletproof jacket for the Indian armed forces, which is not only cheaper but also much lighter.

Bhabha Kavach, named after nuclear physicist Dr. Homi J. Bhabha, the jacket was developed at BARC's Trombay centre in response to a request from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The jacket weighs just 6.6 kg in comparison to the 17-kg jackets in use, and has passed over 30 tests carried out by certified agencies.

Bhabha Kavach is available in three variants as per the requirement of the armed forces.

The jacket is made using extremely hard boron carbide ceramics that is hot-pressed with carbon nano-tubes and composite polymer. BARC has been using boron carbide in the control rods of its nuclear reactors.

While the cost of a Bhabha Kavach is ₹70,000, jackets of similar strength are available in the range of ₹1.5 lakh and have to be imported.