

Current Affairs:05.05.2022

TRADE DEFICIT IN INDIA

India exported merchandise estimated at \$38.19 billion in April 2022, a 24.2% increase from a year earlier but 9.5% lower than the record \$42.2 billion shipped out in March, official estimates released.

About: The trade deficit, however, expanded to \$20.07 billion from \$18.5 billion in March, as imports grew at a faster 26.6% pace to \$58.26 billion. Sequentially, goods imports declined 4.1% last month from March's level. Gold imports fell by a sharp 73% year-on-year to just \$1.7 billion, even as coal imports more than doubled to over \$4.7 billion from \$2 billion a year earlier.

Petroleum imports comprising crude and products surged 81.2% to exceed \$19.5 billion, and made up a third of the total imports in the month. India's goods exports hit a record \$420 billion in 2021-22, while imports also hit an all-time high of about \$612 billion, leading to a \$192 billion deficit in the last financial year.

Although the non-oil trade deficit remained stable in April, there was a shift in its composition, with a plunge in gold imports being offset by a rise in non-oil, non-gold imports such as coal and chemicals, an unsavoury yet expected fallout of the higher commodity prices engendered by the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Among India's top 10 export commodities, gems and jewellery exports dipped by a marginal 2.1% in April, while rice exports fell 14.24%.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

India has fallen eight places from 142 to 150 in the 2022 World Press Freedom Index of 180 countries.

HOW THE NEIGHBOURS FARE



About:

India's ranking, as per the report, fell on the back of increased "violence against journalists" and a "politically partisan media", which has landed press freedom in a state of "crisis" in the world's largest democracy. The ranking of India's neighbours, except that of Nepal, have also slid down, with the index placing Pakistan at 157th position, Sri Lanka 146th,

Bangladesh 162nd and Myanmar at 176th position, the report released by Reporters Without Borders said. According to the RSF 2022 World Press Freedom Index, Nepal has climbed up by 30 points in the global ranking at 76th position.

This year, Norway (1st) Denmark (2nd), Sweden (3rd) Estonia (4th) and Finland (5th) grabbed the top positions, while North Korea remained at the bottom of the list of the 180 countries and territories ranked by the Reporters Without Borders.

About the global scenario, the RSF said the 20th World Press Freedom Index reveals a two-fold increase in "polarisation" amplified by information chaos, that is, media polarisation fuelling divisions within countries, as well as polarisation between countries at the international level.

World Press Freedom Day

- In 1993, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 3 May as **World Press Freedom Day** following a Recommendation adopted at the twenty-sixth session of UNESCO's **General Conference in 1991**.
- The day also marks the **1991 Windhoek Declaration (adopted by UNESCO)**.
- It aimed toward the 'development of a free, independent and pluralistic press'.
- **Theme of 2022:** Journalism under digital siege

India's Sedition Law

Recently, the Union government sought more time to file a reply to a **plea challenging the constitutional validity** of the sedition charge under **Section 124A** of the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)**.

Cross & Climb, Rohtak



Pleas are being filed in the Supreme Court by the Editors Guild of India and Major General (Retired) S.G. Vombatkere.



The plea is about the Sedition law causing a ‘chilling effect’ on free speech and is an unreasonable restriction on free expression, a fundamental right (Article 19).

What is Sedition Law?

Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which deals with sedition, was drafted by Thomas Babington Macaulay and included in the IPC in 1870.

Case in Supreme Court

Supreme Court’s Earlier Stand: The sedition law has been challenged several times over the last few years but it has managed to survive all of the challenges against it.

In the landmark **Kedar Nath versus Union of India case (1962)**, the SC upheld the **constitutional validity of the sedition law** while trying to curtail its misuse.

The Court upheld the law on the basis that this power was required by the state to protect itself.

Ambit of the provisions of Sections 153A and 505 of the IPC 1860

Section 153 A: Punishes acts promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc, and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.

Section 505: Makes the publication and circulation of content that may cause ill-will or hatred between different groups an offence.