



## News Analysis (22 Apr, 2021)

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## International Religious Freedom Report 2021

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### Why in News

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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 2020.

Earlier, the US State Department, in its 2020 Human Rights Report, pointed out several Human Rights Issues in India.

### Key Points

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- **About the 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**.
  - **USCIRF's 2021 Annual Report** assesses religious freedom violations and progress during calendar year 2020 in 26 countries and makes independent recommendations for US policy.
  - It is **Headquartered at Washington DC**.

- **About the Report:**
  - The Report’s **primary focus is on two groups of countries:**
    - **“Country of Particular Concern (CPC)”** 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)**.
    - A **“Special Watch List” country** is one that is deemed not to meet all of the CPC criteria but engages in or tolerates severe violations of religious freedom.
  - The Report **also includes USCIRF’s recommendations of violent nonstate actors for designation by the US State Department as “entities of particular concern,”** or EPCs, under IRFA.
- **Latest Recommendations of USCIRF:**
  - **For the CPC List:**
    - Recommendations for the CPC list are **Russia, Syria and Vietnam and India.**
    - **Countries already on the CPCs list** and recommended by USCIRF for re-designation are Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
  - **For A Special Watch List:**

Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Turkey and Uzbekistan are recommended for a ‘Special Watch List’, along with Cuba and Nicaragua, both of which were already on the list for 2019.
  - **For EPCs:**

Recommends **seven non-state actors** for redesignation as “entities of particular concern” (EPCs)—, Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Jamaat Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), and the **Taliban**.

## India’s Case

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- **Areas of Concern Highlighted :**

- **Passage of the Religiously Discriminatory Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)**: CAA fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from South Asian countries meeting certain other criteria.
- **Delhi Riots**: The report mentions the attack that took place on religious minorities during Delhi riots by the religious majority population in February 2020.
- **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**: The consequences of exclusion – as exemplified by a large detention camp being built in Assam – are potentially devastating.
- **Anti-Conversion Laws**: Despite India’s constitutional protections for religious freedom, **approximately one-third of India’s 28 states limit or prohibit religious conversion** to protect the dominant religion from perceived threats from religious minorities.
- **Disinformation and Incitement of Violence**: Government officials and nonstate actors **continued to use social media and other forms of communication to harass and spread hatred and disinformation** against minority communities, including Muslims, Christians, and Dalits.

The **fervor around cow slaughter continues** to take root in policy, in December, the state of Karnataka revised an earlier bill to impose fines and imprisonment for the transport, sale, and purchase of cattle for slaughter.
- **Religious Freedom in Jammu and Kashmir**: In Muslim-majority **Jammu and Kashmir**, restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly negatively impacted religious freedom, including the observance of religious holy days and the ability to attend prayers.

The **shutdown of the internet for nearly 18 months**—the longest-ever shutdown in any democracy—and other restrictions on communications caused significant disruption and limited religious freedom.
- **Closing Space for Civil Society**: Government officials used the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** and other statutes to detain advocates, media, and academics, including religious minorities.

In September 2020, the **FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act)** was amended to place further restrictions on NGOs, including reducing the amount of foreign funds that could be used for administrative expenses and requiring that accounts be held in a government-designated bank.

- **Recommendations of USCIRF:**

- It has recommended the US administration **to impose targeted sanctions on Indian individuals and entities** for ‘severe violations of religious freedom’.
- Condemn ongoing religious freedom violations and support religious organizations and human rights groups being targeted for their advocacy of religious freedom.
- The US administration **should promote inter-faith dialogue and the rights of all communities at bilateral and multilateral forums** “such as the ministerial of the Quadrilateral (the Quad)).
- The US Congress should **raise issues in the US-India bilateral space**, such as by hosting hearings, writing letters and constituting Congressional delegations.

## **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 particular 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 interest of minorities.

### **Source: TH**

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## **Gender Bias and Inclusion in Advertising in India Report: UNICEF**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)** and the **Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDI)** released a report titled “**Gender Bias and Inclusion In Advertising In India**”.

- The research has shown that while **ads in India are superior to global benchmarks** insofar as **girls and women have parity of representation** in terms of screen and speaking time, **their portrayal is problematic as they further gender stereotypes**.
- **GDI is a non-profit research organization** that researches gender representation in media and advocates for equal representation of women.

## Key Points

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- **Gender and Prominence:**

- **About:**

While girls and women have a strong presence in Indian advertising, they are **mostly reinforcing traditional gender roles** by selling domestic and beauty products to female consumers.

- **Impact:**

This is **problematic because of the intergenerational transfer of norms to children**, including a lack of empowering role models for men undertaking domestic work in the home and women working in the paid workforce.

- **Stereotyping Physical and Mental Capability:**

- **About:**

- **Decision Making:**

**Male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters** (7.3% compared with 4.8%), the latter are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).

- **Colourism:**

- Two-thirds of **female characters (66.9%) in Indian ads have light or medium-light skin tones**—a higher percentage than male characters (52.1%).
- This is problematic because **this advances the discriminatory notion** that light skin tones are more attractive.

- **Objectification:**

- Female characters are nine times **more likely to be shown as “stunning/very attractive”** than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%).
- Female **characters are also invariably thin**, but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising.

- **Impact:**

Sexual objectification has serious consequences in the real world. The more girls and women internalize the idea that their primary value comes from being a sex object, the **higher their rates of depression, body hatred and shame, eating disorders, and a host of other personal impacts**.

- **Recommendations:**
  - **To Governing Bodies:**
    - Establish **guidelines** for advertising with benchmarks for **equitable representation for girls and women and promoting positive gender norms, including around leadership and body attitudes.**
    - Establish **skin color guidelines and caste/class guidelines.**
    - Promote **diverse templates of beauty** rather than regressive beauty norms of women and girls being only fair, thin, etc.
    - Advocate with advertisers to see value add in **diversifying representation in gender, skin tone, and caste/class benchmarks** to help promote brand equity and expand the consumer base.
  - **To Content Creators:**
    - Need to be more **sensitive and aware towards gender representation.**

## Gender Equality in India

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- Gender equality in India **has made gains** as a result of legislative and policy measures, social-protection schemes for girls and adolescents and gender sensitive budgets over past years.
  - **Some Indian Initiatives Related to Girls: Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme,**
- India **has attained gender parity in primary enrolment** and boosted female literacy from 54% (2001) to 66% (2011).
- **India ranks 108<sup>th</sup> out of 153 countries in the global gender inequality index in 2020**, an increase since 2015 when it was ranked 130th out of 155 countries.
- India is **among one of the few countries where under-5 mortality rates among girls is higher than boys.**
- **Gender-based discrimination and normalization of violence** continues to be a challenge. Many women face overlapping social, emotional, physical, economic, cultural and caste related deprivations.
- **Adolescent girls face vulnerabilities**, including poor nutritional status, increased burden of care, early marriage and early pregnancy, and issues related to reproductive health and empowerment while 56% are anemic.

## Way Forward

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- Misrepresentation and harmful stereotypes of women in advertising have a significant impact on women and young girls—and how they view themselves and their value to society. While female representation dominates in Indian ads, **they are still marginalised by colorism, hypersexualisation, and without careers or aspirations outside of the home.**

- The stark inequality evident in portrayals of females in **these advertisements must be addressed to ensure an equitable society.**

**Source: TH**

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## **Subsidy Policy for Urea Produced from Coal Gasification**

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### **Why in News**

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The Cabinet has **approved an exclusive subsidy policy for urea produced through coal gasification by Talcher Fertilizers Limited (TFL).**

**Urea is a widely used fertiliser in India.**

### **Key Points**

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- **About the TFL Urea Project:**
  - **Capacity and Location:** TFL is **setting up the 1.27 million tonne per annum capacity urea plant based on coal gasification technology in Odisha** with an estimated investment of Rs. 13,277 crore.
    - **This will be the only plant to produce the nitrogenous soil nutrient (urea) through coal gasification route.**
    - **Talcher Fertilizers Ltd. (TFL) is a Joint Venture Company of four PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings)** namely Rashtriya Chemicals & Fertilizers (RCF), GAIL (India) Ltd. (GAIL), Coal India Ltd. (CIL) and Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. (FCIL).
  - **Expected Benefits:**
    - The project will **improve availability of fertilizer to farmers** thereby boosting development of eastern region and will save transport subsidy for supply of urea in eastern part of the country.
    - It would **assist in reducing Urea imports** to the tune of 12.7 LMT (Lakh Metric Tonnes) per annum leading to savings in foreign exchange.
    - It will also give a boost to the '**Make in India' initiative** and '**Atmanirbhar Bharat' campaign** and would help development of infrastructure like roads, railways etc.
    - It will also **provide new business opportunities** in the form of ancillary industries in the catchment area of the project.

- **Coal Gasification:**

- Coal gasification is the **process of converting coal into synthesis gas** (also called syngas), which is a mixture of hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>).
  - The syngas **can be used in a variety of applications** such as in the production of electricity and making chemical products, such as fertilisers.
  - The **hydrogen** obtained from coal gasification can be used for various purposes such as making **ammonia**, powering a hydrogen economy.
- The **ammonia is reacted with the carbon dioxide** to produce **urea melt**.
- **In-situ gasification of coal**—or **Underground Coal Gasification (UCG)**—is the technique of converting coal into gas while it is still in the seam and then extracting it through wells.
- **India has set the target** that by 2030 it will gasify 100 million tonne of coal under four major projects with an overall investment of Rs. 20,000 crore.

- **Fertilizer Consumption in India:**

- **India's fertiliser consumption in FY20** was about 61 million tonne — of which **55% was urea**—and is estimated to have increased by 5 million tonne in FY21.
  - Since **non-urea (MoP, DAP, complex) varieties cost higher**, many **farmers prefer to use more urea** than actually needed.
  - The government has taken a number of **measures to reduce urea consumption**. It introduced **neem-coated urea** to reduce illegal diversion of urea for non-agricultural uses. It also stepped up the **promotion of organic and zero-budget farming**.
- **Subsidy on Urea:** The Centre **pays subsidy on urea to fertiliser manufacturers on the basis of cost of production at each plant** and the units are required to sell the fertiliser at the government-set Maximum Retail Price (MRP).
- **Subsidy on Non-Urea Fertilisers:** The **MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are decontrolled** or fixed by the companies. The Centre, however, pays a **flat per-tonne subsidy** on these nutrients to ensure they are priced at “reasonable levels”.

**Examples of non-urea fertilisers:** Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP), Muriate of Potash (MOP)

**Source: PIB**

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**Boao Forum**

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**Why in News**

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The opening ceremony of the **Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2021** was recently held in Boao, south China's Hainan Province.

The BFA, this year, is celebrating its **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**.

## Key Points

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- **About BFA Annual Conference 2021:**

- The forum witnessed **more than 2500 participants coming from more than 60 countries**. This year's **theme** is 'A World in Change: Join Hands to Strengthen Global Governance and Advance Belt and Road Cooperation'.
- The **main agenda** is to strengthen mutual understanding in the post-pandemic era, create additional incentives for overall socio-economic growth and effective global governance.
- An **annual report on Asian Economy** was released on the occasion which highlighted the importance of Asian economies which have fared well despite the ongoing pandemic.
  - In terms of **purchasing power parity**, Asia's share in the global economic aggregate in 2020 reached 47.3%, up 0.9 percentage points from 2019.
  - It showed that the economic integration of all Asian economies is accelerating.

Signing of **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP)** has been injecting strong momentum into regional and global economic growth. **India is not a part of RCEP.**

- **About Boao Forum:**

- The **Boao Forum for Asia (BFA)** is an **international not for profit organization** which was **jointly initiated by 26 member states in 2001**, the **members have now increased to 29**.  
**India is also a member of the BFA.**
- Its **annual conference** is held in **Boao, Hainan province of China** on a regular basis.
- The establishment of BFA is modelled on the lines of the **World Economic Forum** which bases its annual meeting in **Davos-Klosters, Switzerland**. Thus earning the name of '**Davos of the East**'.
- The founding purpose of BFA was to **promote economic integration in Asia**. Its mission now is to **pool positive energy for the development of Asia and the world**.

The forum has not only played a unique role in **pooling consensus and putting forward valuable "Boao proposals,"** but also engaged countries in **addressing global issues** and promoting world development and prosperity.

- Its **five focal areas** include **technology innovation, health, education, culture and media** in response to the new economy.

## **Fifth Session of Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** inaugurated the **fifth session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)** established under **Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)**.

### **Key Points**

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- **About the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH):**
  - **Establishment:** It was formed in **2013**.
  - **Terms of Reference:**
    - To **elaborate worldwide standards for spices and culinary herbs** in their dried and dehydrated state in whole, ground, and cracked or crushed form.
    - To **consult, as necessary, with other international organizations** in the standards development process to avoid duplication.
  - **Host:**

**India is the host country** and **Spices Board India** is the **Secretariat** for organising the **sessions of the committee**.

**Spices Board (Ministry of Commerce and Industry)** is the flagship organization for the development and worldwide promotion of Indian spices.

- **About the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC):**

- **About:**

- It is an **intergovernmental body** established jointly by the UN's **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** and the **World Health Organisation (WHO)** in **1963**, within the framework of the **Joint Food Standards Programme**.

- The **Secretariat of the CAC** is hosted at **FAO headquarters in Rome**.

- It was **established to protect the health of consumers** and ensure fair practices in the food trade.
    - It **meets in regular session once a year** alternating between Geneva and Rome.

- **Members:**

- Currently, it has **189 Codex Members** made up of 188 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization (**The European Union**).
    - **India** is a **member**.

- **Food Standards:**

- The **Codex Alimentarius is a collection of international food standards** that have been adopted by the CAC.
    - Codex Standards **cover all the main foods**, whether processed, semi-processed or raw.

- In addition, materials used in the further processing of food products are included to the extent necessary for achieving the principal objectives of the code.

- Codex provisions **concern the hygienic and nutritional quality of food**, including microbiological norms, food additives, pesticide and **veterinary drug residues, contaminants, labelling and presentation**, and methods of sampling and risk analysis.

- **About Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) :**
  - **Establishment:**
    - **FSSAI** is an autonomous **statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act)**.
    - It is **headquartered in Delhi**.
  - **Administrative Ministry:**

Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
  - **Functions:**
    - **Framing of regulations** to lay down the standards and guidelines of **food safety**.
    - **Granting FSSAI food safety license** and certification for food businesses.
    - **Laying down procedure** and guidelines for laboratories in **food businesses**.
    - **To provide suggestions** to the government in framing **the policies**.
    - **To collect data** regarding contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of **a rapid alert system**.
    - **Creating an information** network across the country about food safety.
    - **Promote general awareness** about food safety and **food standards**.

**Source: PIB**

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## **Civil Services Day**

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### **Why in News**

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Every year, **21<sup>st</sup> April** is celebrated as the **Civil Services Day** by the Government of India.

### **Key Points**

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- **About:**
  - It is celebrated as an **occasion for the civil servants** to rededicate themselves to the causes of citizens and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.
  - The date is chosen to **commemorate the day when the first Home Minister** of Independent India, **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** addressed the **probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947** at Metcalf House, Delhi.

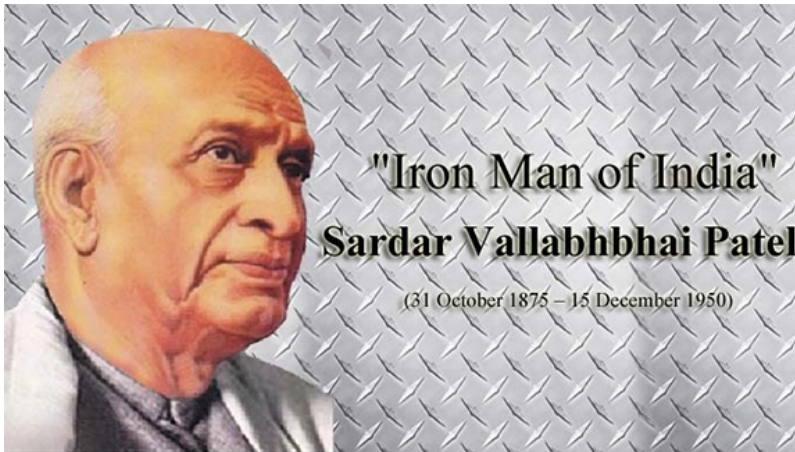
He referred to civil servants as the '**Steel Frame of India**'.

- **Civil Services Day Function:**

- The **first function on civil services day** was held in Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi in **2006**.
- On this day, the **Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented** to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.

## **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**

- He was born on **31<sup>st</sup> October, 1875** in Nadiad, Gujarat.



**National Unity Day** is celebrated every year to **commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

- He was the **first Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister** of independent India.
- He played an important role in the **integration of many Indian princely states** to make an Indian federation.
- Women of Bardoli bestowed the title '**Sardar**' on Vallabhbhai Patel, which means '**a Chief or a Leader**'.
- He is recognized as the **real unifier of India** for his colossal contribution to integrate and make India a united (Ek Bharat) and an independent nation.
- He requested the people of India to live together by uniting in order to create **Shreshth Bharat (Foremost India)**.

**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat** was announced by the Prime Minister in 2015 on the occasion of the **140<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

- He is also remembered as the '**Patron saint of India's civil servants**' as he established the modern all-India services system.
- The **Statue of Unity** at Kevadiya in Narmada district of Gujarat was built in his honour.

**Source: TH**

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# Earth Day

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## Why in News

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Every year, **22<sup>nd</sup> April** is celebrated as Earth Day to raise public awareness about the environment and inspire people to save and protect it.

The **theme** for the year 2021 ‘**Restore Our Earth**’ examines **natural processes, emerging green technologies and innovative thinking** that can restore the world’s ecosystems.

## Key Points

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- **Background:**

- Earth Day was **first observed in 1970**, when 20 million took to the streets to protest against environmental degradation on the call of **US Senator Gaylord Nelson**.

The event was **triggered by the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill**, as well as other issues such as smog and polluted rivers.

- In **2009**, the **United Nations** designated 22<sup>nd</sup> April as ‘**International Mother Earth Day**’.

- **About:**

- Earth Day is now **globally coordinated by EARTHDAY.ORG**, which is a non profit organisation. It was **formerly known as Earth Day Network**.
- It aims to “**build the world’s largest environmental movement** to drive transformative change for people and the planet.”
- It recognizes a **collective responsibility**, as called for in the **1992 Rio Declaration (Earth Summit)**, to promote harmony with nature and the Earth to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations of humanity.
- The landmark **Paris Agreement**, which brings almost 200 countries together in setting a common target to reduce global greenhouse emissions, was also signed on Earth Day 2016.

## Other Important Days

- 22<sup>nd</sup> March: **World Water Day**
- 22<sup>nd</sup> April: Earth Day
- 22<sup>nd</sup> May : **World Biodiversity Day**
- 5<sup>th</sup> June: **World Environment Day**
- **Earth Overshoot Day**

## Earth Hour

- **Earth Hour** is the **World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF)**'s annual initiative that **began in 2007**. It is **held every year on the last Saturday of March**.
- It encourages people from more than 180 countries to **switch off the lights from 8.30 pm to 9.30 pm** as per their local time.

**Source: IE**

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## **Global Youth Mobilization Initiative**

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### **Why in News**

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Recently, an initiative called the '**Global Youth Mobilization**' has been **launched for youths in communities impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic**.

A **Global Youth Summit (GYS)**, to be held virtually on 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> April 2021, marks the starting point for young people to get involved in the mobilization.

The GYS **aims to offer young people aged 14-30 new insights, skills and contacts, as well as a platform** to engage with their peers, leaders and policy makers.

### **Key Points**

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- **About:** It is a **movement of young people** taking action to **improve their lives now and in a post-Covid-19 world**.
- **Aim:** To **address the negative impact of the pandemic** on young people and support them to build back better.
- **Organisations Involved:** It is **supported by the world's six largest youth organisations, World Health Organization (WHO), and United Nations (UN) Foundation**.
- **Need:** There are **an estimated 1.2 billion young people impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic response measures**.

Disruptions to **education, employment, services and social support** have changed the future of an entire generation.

- **Funding:** With **support from the Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund**, Global Youth Mobilization will **support and scale-up youth-led solutions and youth engagement programs** across the world.

The Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund was **established by the WHO with the help of the UN Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation**.

**Source: DTE**

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