

India joins G7 to protect Free Speech

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[GS Paper 2 - International Organizations, Regional and Global Agreements involving India]

Context - India, along with G7 countries and four invited countries signed the '2022 Resilient Democracies Statement' in which they committed to "guarding the freedom, independence and diversity of civil society actors" and "protecting the freedom of expression and opinion online and offline".

Key Developments

- A four-page statement, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the G-7 summit in Germany, said, "We, the Leaders of Germany, Argentina, Canada, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Senegal, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the European Union, affirm our commitment to strengthening the resilience of our democracies."
- The signatories said that democracies enable "open public debate, independent and pluralistic media" and the "free flow of information online and offline", fostering legitimacy, transparency, responsibility and accountability for citizens and elected representatives alike.

Key Principles of the Statement

- As per the Statement, the Signatories are prepared to defend these principles, which include:
 1. Protecting the freedom of expression and opinion online and offline and ensuring a free and independent media landscape through our work with relevant international initiatives.
 2. Ensuring an open, free, global, interoperable, reliable and secure internet.
 3. Increasing the cyber resilience of digital infrastructure, including by improving and sharing awareness of cyber threats and expanding cyber response cooperation.
 4. Countering hybrid threats, in particular information manipulation and interference, including disinformation.
 5. Cooperating to counter information manipulation, promote accurate information, and advocate for our shared democratic values worldwide.
 6. Promoting affordable access to diverse sources of reliable and trustworthy information and data, online and offline, including through a multi-stakeholder approach, and by strengthening digital skills and digital literacy.
 7. Enhancing transparency about the actions of online platforms to combat violent, extremist and inciting content online.
- It said that democracies promote solidarity and non-discriminatory, diverse, equitable, accessible and inclusive environments, enabling fair representation and political participation.
- The countries also committed to “protecting freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and promoting inter-faith dialogue” and “promoting social cohesion, solidarity and the inclusion of all members of society online and offline, while denouncing all forms of discrimination and violence”.