INSIGHT DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Ales Bialiatski, Russia's Memorial and Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties win Nobel Peace Prize 2022

Why in the news?

- This year's Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to jailed **Belarus rights activist Ales Bialiatski**, the Russian group Memorial and the Ukrainian organisation Centre for Civil Liberties. The winner was announced Friday in Oslo by Berit Reiss-Andersen, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.
- The award has in the past put a spotlight on groups and activists trying to prevent conflicts, alleviate hardship and protect human rights.

THE NOBEL
PEACE PRIZE 2022

Illustrations: Niklas Elmehed

- Last year's winners have faced a tough time since receiving the prize. Journalists Dmitry Muratov of Russia and Maria Ressa of the Philippines have been fighting for the survival of their news organisations, defying government efforts to silence them.
- They were honoured last year for "**their efforts to safeguard freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace**." A week of Nobel Prize announcements kicked off Monday with Swedish scientist Svante Paabo **receiving the award in medicine for unlocking secrets of Neanderthal DNA** that provided key insights into our immune system.
- The **Nobel Peace Prize for 2022** has been awarded to human rights advocate **Ales Bialiatski from Belarus, the Russian human rights organisation Memorial, and the Ukrainian human rights organisation Center for Civil Liberties**, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced.
- The laureates represent civil society in their home countries. They have for many years **promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens**. They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power. Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy.

- With the awardees being from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, an implicit message has been sent about the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The **Norwegian Nobel Committee** wishes to honour three outstanding champions of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence in the neighbour countries Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

- The Guardian reported Berit Reiss-Andersen, the head of the Nobel committee, as responding to a question on whether the prize was "**a timely birthday president**" to Vladimir Putin on the Russian president's 70th birthday which falls on October 7. She said the prize is not being addressed to him, and that "we always give a prize for something and to somebody and not against anyone."

The three prize winners: Belarus's Ales Bialiatski

- **Ales Bialiatski** was **one of the initiators of the democracy movement** that emerged in Belarus in the mid-1980s. Before 1991, when the former Soviet Union fell and independent countries emerged, many countries in Central Asia and Europe saw pro-independence movements. **Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko** has been in power since 1994 – when the post first came into being.

- Bialiatski is also **credited with founding the organisation Viasna** (Spring) in 1996 in response to the controversial constitutional amendments that gave the president dictatorial powers. Over time, Viasna evolved into a "broad-based human rights organisation that documented and protested against the authorities' use of torture against political prisoners", said the committee.

- Having been imprisoned earlier for three years, he was arrested most recently after the large-scale demonstrations against the regime in 2020 and is still detained without trial. In 2020, he was one of the three recipients of the **Right Livelihood Award by the Swedish Right Livelihood Foundation**, sometimes referred to as the "**Alternative Nobel**".

- The committee lauded his efforts and said, "Despite tremendous personal hardship, Mr Bialiatski has not yielded an inch in his fight for human rights and democracy in Belarus".

Russian human rights organisation, Memorial

- The committee said the organisation was established in 1987, "by human rights activists in the former Soviet Union who wanted to ensure that the victims of the communist regime's oppression would never be forgotten."

- Nobel Peace Prize laureate Andrei Sakharov, who won the prize in 1954, and human rights advocate Svetlana Gannushkina were among the organisation's founders. Memorial is based on the notion that confronting past crimes is essential in preventing new ones.

- It has been described as the largest human rights organisation in Russia, and in the present day, it helped in gathering information on "the political oppression and human rights violations in Russia", as per the committee's press release, which called it "the most authoritative source of information on political prisoners in Russian detention facilities".

- In the last two years, it has been shut down and liquidated by the Russian Supreme Court, but the organisation responded at the time by saying, "Nobody plans to give up."

Ukrainian human rights organisation, Center for Civil Liberties

- The Center for Civil Liberties was founded in Kyiv in 2007 "for the purpose of advancing human rights and democracy in Ukraine", said the committee.
- As per its own website, the Centre describes itself as "One of the leading actors in Ukraine, influencing the formation of public opinion and public policy, supporting the development of civic activism, and actively participating in international networks and solidarity actions to promote human rights".
- After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the **Center for Civil Liberties has engaged in efforts to identify and document Russian "war crimes" against the Ukrainian civilian population**, according to the committee.

Source: Indian Express