



SDG India Index

The **NITI Aayog** has released its **SDG India Index** which intends to provide a holistic view on the social, economic and environmental status of the country and its States.

Index

- **First** of its kind '**SDG India Index**' has been developed in collaboration with the **Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute, United Nations in India, and NITI Aayog.**
 - In September 2016, MoSPI developed a **National Indicator Framework (NIF)** which is a consolidated list of possible national indicators. It consists of **306 statistical indicators** to serve as a **backbone for monitoring of SDGs.**
- NITI Aayog has prepared the SDG India Index spanning across **13 out of 17 SDGs** (leaving out Goals 12, 13, 14 and 17).
- Being the **baseline report**, it does **not consider time series comparison** of data. As a result, the SDG India Index tells us where a State/UT currently stands on each of the indicators considered, and will present incremental change in subsequent versions.
- Classification Criteria based on SDG India Index Score is as follows: **Aspirant: 0-49; Performer: 50-64; Front Runner: 65-99; Achiever: 100.**

Key Findings

- **Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu** have emerged as the **front runners** in the race to achieve key sustainable development goals (SDGs) in a ranking of states released by NITI Aayog.
- **Kerala's** top rank is attributed to its superior performance in providing **good health, reducing hunger, achieving gender equality and providing quality education.**
- **Himachal Pradesh** ranks high on providing **clean water and sanitation, in reducing inequalities and preserving mountain ecosystem.**
- The toppers in **gender equality, Sikkim and Union territories Andaman and Nicobar islands and Chandigarh** have crossed the halfway mark in reaching the goals.
- **Jharkhand, Odisha and Nagaland** are among the states that have a lot more **ground to cover** in the overall rankings.

Limitations

- **Exclusion of goals:** SDG India Index does not currently cover Goals 12, 13 and 14 largely on account of **unavailability of comparable data** across States and UTs. Further, SDG 17 was left out as it focuses on **international partnerships.**
- **Indicators emerging from the State schemes not included:** The Indicators focus largely on data sources emerging from central official statistical systems and the respective Union Ministries/Departments.
- **Limitation of equal weightage:** Assigning equal weightage for all indicators across all Goals may lead to biased results. Additionally, some indicators may be **less relevant to some States.** For example, indicators like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) have less relevance in States like Punjab and Haryana because they have already been performing better on these targets. Thus, their progress on these schematic indicators will seem less in comparison to other States.
- **Missing data:** Data for a few States /UTs is **not available** for some indicators.

Background

- The Sustainable Development goals were adopted at the **UN Sustainable Development Summit in September, 2015**.
- They came into **force from January 1st, 2016** and have **2030 as deadline** for achieving the targets.
- The success of Agenda 2030 globally will depend, on the **progress India makes on the SDGs**. It is not just the size of India's population (about 17% of the world population) or the scale of its interventions that makes it so critical to the SDGs, but its unique convergence of extraordinary economic growth, commitment to sustainability, and social and technological innovations.
- India has also emerged as a **global leader on the international climate action agenda** and an enabler of **sustainable development for developing countries around the world**.
- This combined with some of the world's largest and most ambitious social programmes including **housing for all, energy for all, urbanization, health and nutrition, and digital and financial inclusion**, make it a leading force for the SDGs globally.
- This SDG India Index by NITI Aayog is an important first step in **enabling comprehensive tracking** of the country's progress, and in benchmarking SDGs for **both central and State governments** across the country serving its **twin mandate** to oversee the **implementation of SDGs** in the country, and also **promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism** among States and UTs.
- The SDG India Index embodies the **five Ps** of the global SDG movement - **people, planet, prosperity, partnership and peace**.

Way Forward

- The SDG India Index will help every State and Union Territory identify their strengths and areas of opportunity, relative to their peers, and to identify the steps they can take towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
 - It is also important to note that this exercise has revealed that their **urgent need for the improvement of statistical systems to generate data** that helps in effective monitoring of SDGs at the national and State level on a real-time basis. The selection of indicators for present exercise was constrained by the availability of data. Improved data availability and quality in the future will make the index more robust.
 - Going forward, the report should be used for **identifying priority areas** that require interventions and also to **strengthen capacities for monitoring SDGs**.
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Data Interception by Government

Recently the government has authorised 10 **intelligence and investigating agencies to intercept, monitor and decrypt "any information"** generated, transmitted, received or stored in "any computer".

- The 10 agencies include **Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Bureau of Investigation, National Investigation Agency, Cabinet Secretariat (RAW), Directorate of Signal Intelligence** (For service areas of Jammu & Kashmir, North-East and Assam only), and **Commissioner of Police, Delhi**.
- Any subscriber or service provider or any person in charge of any computer resource is bound to extend all facilities and technical assistance to these agencies.

Legitimacy of the Notification

- **Provision for interception of information** from computer resources exists since 2000. **Section 69(1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000** allowed this in the interest of the **country's**

sovereignty and integrity, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, or public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence.

- **Section 69 was amended in 2008** to enable the Centre and the State governments to **“intercept, monitor or decrypt” any information** transmitted through, received or stored in a computer.
- Each case of interception, monitoring, decryption is to be approved by the competent authority i.e. **Union Home secretary**. These powers are also available to the competent authority in the State governments as per **IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules 2009**.
- All such cases of interception or monitoring or decryption are to be placed before the **review committee headed by Cabinet Secretary**, which shall meet at least once in two months to review such cases. In case of **State governments**, such cases are reviewed by a **committee headed by the Chief Secretary concerned**.
- The notification does not confer any new powers and is **analogous to the authorisation issued under the Telegraph Act 1885 which allowed interception of phone calls**.
- Every individual case will continue to require prior approval of the Union Home Ministry or the State government. The Home Ministry has not delegated its power to any law enforcement or security agency.

Criticism

- The Government notification giving a **blanket approval to electronic surveillance is a direct assault on civil liberties and personal freedom of citizens**. It may amount to creation of a **‘surveillance state’**.
- It is seen as a **challenge to the 2017 K.S. Puttaswamy (privacy) judgment** of the Supreme Court, which directed the government to protect informational privacy of every individual.

Conclusion

- The Government should **strike a balance between national security and individual privacy** as in K. S puttaswamy judgment, the Supreme Court had asked the government to always carefully and sensitively balance individual privacy and the legitimate concerns of the state, even if national security was at stake.

US to Pull Out Troops from Syria and Afghanistan

United States has decided to withdraw over 2,000 US troops from Syria after it has declared victory over the Islamic State.

- US has also decided to reduce by half the US forces in Afghanistan.
- These decisions mark the end of a prolonged phase of American military interventions in the Middle East and South Asia.

Likely Impact of US Troops Withdrawal

- Allies of US like the UK, Germany, and France have expressed dismay over the decision as they also have troops stationed in Syria. The Syria Democratic Forces (SDF) warned of a military vacuum that would leave the alliance trapped between "hostile parties".
- Experts believe that the withdrawal of troops will allow regional actors like Iran to increase their footprints in Syria.
- It may lead to demands for US troops withdrawal from Iraq also.
- An imminent US withdrawal might lead to an open confrontation between Turkish and Kurdish forces.

- The withdrawal of US may lead to the resurgence of forces like Islamic State in Syria and of Taliban in Afghanistan.

Impact on India

- India must be concerned about the changes in US stance in the middle east and Afghanistan as it will **impact our interest in the region and in our neighborhood.**
- India was impacted by the **rise of the Islamic state** after the turmoil in Syria.
- The **extremist group IS (Islamic State), extended its reach to South Asia**—home to the largest Muslim population in the world—is of concern to India, which has significant stakes in the peace and stability in South Asia.
- The threat was compounded by the fact that **IS started attracting Indian youth.**
- The resurgence of Taliban will severely impact **India's position and stakes in Afghanistan, embolden Pakistan while destabilizing the region.**

Syrian Crisis

- Syria has been in a **state of civil war since the 2011** uprising known as the “Arab Spring.”
- The Syrian government, led by President Bashar al-Assad, responded to the protests by killing hundreds of demonstrators and imprisoning many more.
- In July 2011, defectors from the **military announced the formation of the Free Syrian Army**, a rebel group aiming to overthrow the government, and Syria began to slide into civil war.
- **International Involvement:** The civil war has spilled beyond the borders of Syria. It has triggered sectarian tensions (**Shia-Kurds-Sunni**), geopolitical rivalries (**US-Russia; Iran-Saudi Arabia-Israel**), and the global threat of **Islamic extremism (Islamic State).**

India Position on Syrian Crisis

- India's position in Syria and the middle east is influenced by its own stakes in the Middle East- **namely energy security and diaspora.**
- India's support for the President Bashar-al-Assad regime in Syria is driven by two factors. The first is its **fears of instability and the rise of Islamists fundamentalism.**
- The second is its commitment to **non-interventionism**, a position shared by members of the BRICS countries.
- In addition to these factors, Assad's Baath Party's has continuously **supported India's stance on the Kashmir issue.**
- In line with this, India supports an all-inclusive Syrian-led process to chart out the future of Syria, its political structures and leadership.

Important Facts for Prelims (22nd December 2018)

District Mineral Fund

- District Mineral Funds under Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojna (PMKKKY) has accrued Rs. 22,859 crore till November 2018. But only Rs. 5,529 crore of the amount collected is utilized.
- The slow pace of District Mineral Fund (DMF) utilization has fed fears of these funds being diverted by State governments for being spent in other regions or for other purposes too.

Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY)

- **Objective:** To minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economic conditions of people in mining districts and also to ensure

a sustainable livelihood for the affected people.

- It is **implemented by the District Mineral Foundations (DMFs)** of the respective districts that use the funds collected by the DMF from the miners.
- District Mineral Foundation (DMF) **is a trust set up** under **Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Amendment Act (MMDRA) 2015** as a **non-profit body** in those districts affected by the mining operations.
- **60% of the funds** will be utilized for high priority areas such as **drinking water supply, health care, sanitation, education, skill development, women and child care, the welfare of aged and disabled people and environment conservation.**
- **40% of the fund** will be utilized for **physical infrastructure, irrigation, energy, and watershed development.**

National Consumer Day

- Every Year **24th December** is observed as National Consumer Day with a specific theme in India. This year the National Consumer Day is celebrated with the theme **“Timely Disposal of Consumer Complaints”**.
 - It is celebrated on this day as the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986** had received the assent of the President.
 - The Consumer Protection Act aims to provide consumers with effective safeguards against different types of exploitation such as defective goods, deficiency in services and unfair trade practices.
 - However, recently the Lok Sabha passed the [Consumer Protection Bill 2018](https://www.drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/22-12-2018/print) which seeks to replace the three-decade-old Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
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