SDG India Index 2020-21

Why in news?

SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) India Index 2020-21 was recently released by the NITI Aayog.

What is the SDG India Index?

- The SDG India Index was first launched in December 2018 in collaboration with the United Nations in India.
- It tracks the progress of all states and UTs on 16 Goals and 115 indicators.
- These are aligned with the National Indicator Framework (NIF) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- It considers parameters including health, education, gender, economic growth, institutions, climate change and environment.
- The SDG India Index scores range between 0–100.
- States and UTs are classified into four categories based on their score as aspirant: 0–49, performer: 50–64, front-runner: 65–99, achiever: 100.

What are the highlights of the recent report?

- The country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points — from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.
- Kerala has retained the top rank with a score of 75.
- Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu both took the second spot with a score of 74.
- Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states.
- Chandigarh maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68).
- Mizoram, Haryana, and Uttarakhand are the top gainers in terms of improvement in their rankings from 2019.
- In 2019, 10 states/UTs belonged to the front-runners category.
- In 2020-21, 12 more states/UTs graduated to this category.
- These are Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, Tripura, Delhi, Lakshadweep, A&N Islands, J&K, and Ladakh.
- 15 states/UTs are in the performer category.
- Currently, there are no states in the aspirant and achiever category.

What do specific indicators show?

- Measures related to the availability of affordable, clean energy showed improvements across several States and UTs.
- The campaign to improve the access of households to electricity and clean cooking fuel has been shown to be an important factor.
- But there has been a major decline in the areas of industry, innovation and infrastructure besides decent work and economic growth.
- These were made worse by the lockdowns imposed to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is a key concern?

- There were stark differences between the southern and western States on the one hand and the north-central and eastern States on the other.
- This points to the persisting socio-economic and governance disparities.
- These, if left unaddressed, will exacerbate federal challenges and outcomes.
- It is already visible in public health challenges during the second wave of COVID-19 across some of the worse-off States.
- The Index has also made some methodological changes.

What is the impact created by the methodological changes?

- The SDG on inequality shows an improvement over 2019, but the indicators used to measure the score have changed.

- The 2020-21 Index drops several economic indicators.
- It gives greater weightage to social equality indicators such as -

i. representation of women and people from marginalised communities in legislatures and local governance institutions
ii. crimes against SC/ST communities

- The index has dropped the well-recognised Gini coefficient measure.
- It has also dropped the growth rate for household expenditure per capita among 40% of rural and urban populations.
- Instead, only the percentage of population in the lowest two wealth quintiles is used.
- The SDG score on inequality thus seems to have missed out on capturing the impact of the pandemic on wealth inequality.
- A UN assessment of the impact of COVID-19 had notably said that the South Asian region may see rising inequality.
- While the better score for India will bring some cheer, governments must work on addressing issues such as increased inequality and economic

despair.

Source: The Indian Express, The Hindu

