Social Progress Index - 2017

Why in news?

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The Social Progress Index for 2017 has been released by a NGO Social Progress Imperative.

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What is Social Progress Index?

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- The Social Progress Index (SPI) measures the development of the country based on the social and environmental measures provided by the country to its citizens.
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- It defines social progress as the capacity of a society to meet the basic human needs of its citizens to enhance and sustain the quality of their lives, and create the conditions for all individuals to reach their full potential.
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- Fifty-four indicators in the areas of basic human needs, foundations of well-being, and opportunity to progress show the relative performance of nations.
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What is the significance of SPI?

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- Generally, many aspects of social progress tend to improve with income growth and wealthier countries deliver better social outcomes than lower-income countries.
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- But it has been observed by SPI that where there is an imbalance between economic growth and social progress, political instability and unrest often arise, as in Russia and Egypt.
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- This indicates lagging social progress also holds back economic growth.
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- The SPI data also reveals that countries have a higher level of social progress even with lower GDP e.g. – Costa Rica.
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How SPI differs from GDP?

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- GDP is an old measure that was developed as a statistical tool for policy makers to determine the recovery from the Great Depression in 1930's.
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- It focuses only on economic growth and is calculated quarterly to primarily analyse the strength of an economy, and for setting economic goals and objectives.
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- It does not capture the social and environmental processes such as level of inequity which exists in the society regardless of overall economic growth.
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- Therefore SPI is seen as a better yardstick to measure a country's level of progress by understanding the citizen's development needs and priorities.
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What are the findings of the Index about India?

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- The list is topped by Scandinavian countries like Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, while India is at 93rd position.
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- India's performance on health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Index is the worst among BRICS nations.
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- India still lags in areas such as water, sanitation and access to higher education.
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- India also scored poorly on incidences of those under 18 who experienced sexual violence.
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Source: Financial Express

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