

NITI Aayog Releases 4th Edition of SDG India Index 2023-24

- The **NITI Aayog has released the 4th edition of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) India Index for 2023-24.** This index measures and tracks the progress of all States and Union Territories (UTs) in India on **113 indicators** aligned with the **National Indicator Framework** set by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.**
- Each State and UT is given a composite score that ranges from **0 to 100 based** on their performance across 16 SDGs. A score of **100 means the State or UT has achieved the targets set for 2030.**
- **The States and UTs are categorized as follows:**
 - **Achiever:** Score of 100
 - **Front Runners:** Scores between 65 and 99
 - **Performers:** Scores between 50 and 64
 - **Aspirants:** Scores between 0 and 49
- **Key Findings:**
- **National Level:**
 - India's composite score improved from **66 in 2020-21 to 71 in 2023-24.**
 - Significant progress was observed in **Goals 1 (No Poverty), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 13 (Climate Action),** which are now in the front runner category.
 - **Goal 13 saw** the highest increase in score, followed by **Goal 1.**
 - **Government** interventions like **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Goal 11), Swachh Bharat Mission (Goal 6), and Ayushman Bharat (Goal 3)** have led to rapid improvements.
- **State/UT Level:**
 - All States have shown an improvement in their overall scores.
 - **32 States and UTs** are in the front runner category.
 - **4 States are in the performer category:** Meghalaya, Nagaland, Jharkhand, and Bihar.
 - **The top States are:** Uttarakhand and Kerala, both with scores of 79.
 - **The top UT is:** Chandigarh.

2nd BIMSTEC Foreign Ministers' Retreat Held in New Delhi

- The second **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** Foreign Ministers' Retreat took place in New Delhi. The first edition was held in **Thailand in 2023.**
- **About BIMSTEC:**
 - **Establishment:** Founded in 1997 with the signing of the Bangkok Declaration.
 - **Member States:** Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bhutan.
 - **Permanent Secretariat:** Located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
 - **Principles:** Sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful co-existence.
 - **Focus Areas:** Trade, environment and climate change, security, agriculture and food security, people-to-people contact, science and technology, and connectivity.
 - **Economic Impact:** The combined GDP of BIMSTEC member states was approximately USD 4.5 trillion in 2022, accounting for around 4.5% of global GDP.
- **Significance of BIMSTEC for India:**
 - **Regional Cooperation:** BIMSTEC aligns with India's Neighbourhood First Policy and Act East Policy, enhancing regional cooperation.
 - **Geostrategic Importance:** Cooperation in the Bay of Bengal region helps secure critical communication lines in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and boosts trade.
 - **Security:** Supports India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision and strengthens maritime cooperation in the IOR.
 - **Regional Platform:** BIMSTEC has the potential to address the shortcomings of SAARC and evolve into a meaningful platform for regional cooperation in South Asia.

Reserve Bank of India- Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (RBI-IOS), 2021

- The Madras High Court has upheld the constitutional validity of the **RBI-IOS 2021**, which prohibits complainants from engaging advocates to represent their cases before the ombudsman. Lawyers have a statutory right, not a fundamental right, to appear before judicial and quasi-judicial bodies.
- **About RBI-IOS, 2021:**
 - **Launch:** Introduced in 2021 by combining three previous RBI ombudsman schemes: Banking Ombudsman Scheme (2006), Ombudsman Scheme for NBFCs (2018), and Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions (2019).
 - **Coverage:** Includes additional regulated entities such as all commercial banks, NBFCs registered with RBI, and Credit Information Companies.
 - **Purpose:** Provides **cost-free** redress of customer complaints related to deficiencies in services provided by entities regulated by the RBI.
- **What is OMBUDSMAN?**
 - A government official responsible for addressing complaints from the public against the various public organizations.
 - **Swedish Concept**

Exercise Sagar Kavach - 01/24

- **Exercise Sagar Kavach - 01/24** is a coastal security exercise conducted along the coast of Andhra Pradesh.
- The exercise aims to validate the effectiveness of coastal security measures in responding to threats from the sea.
- It involves the participation of various assets and personnel from the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Police, fisheries, customs, and other security agencies.

Margin Trading Facility (MTF)

- **Margin Trading Facility (MTF)** is gaining popularity for **stock market investments**. In MTF, the buyer pays a portion of the total value, while the broker covers the rest, charging interest on this loan.
- **Advantages:**
 - Higher profit potential due to access to more capital.
 - Access to a broader range of stocks.
- **Challenges:**
 - Increased risk of higher losses.
 - Interest costs on the borrowed amount.

International Renewable Energy Certificates (I-REC)

- I-REC is a transferable proof that one **megawatt-hour (MWh)** of electricity was produced from renewable sources and added to the grid. It helps **multinational companies (MNCs)** meet their renewable energy consumption targets across different countries with fewer barriers.
- **Key Points:**
 - I-REC remains valid until redeemed by a consumer or withdrawn.
 - India is a leading seller of I-RECs.
 - The International Tracking Standard Foundation founded I-REC.

Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

- **IPBES won the 2024 Blue Planet Prize**, awarded annually by **Japan's Asahi Glass Foundation** to recognize achievements in scientific research and solutions to global environmental problems. The prize includes an award of \$500,000.
- **About IPBES:**
 - **Establishment:** Founded in Panama City in 2012.
 - **Purpose:** An independent intergovernmental body to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services.
 - **Status:** Not a UN body, but the United Nations Environment Programme provides secretariat services.
 - **Secretariat:** Located in Bonn, Germany.
 - **Membership:** Over 145 member states, including India. All UN member states are eligible for membership.

e-FAST India initiative (Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport – India)

- The NITI Aayog, along with the World Resources Institute (WRI), has launched **e-FAST India (Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport – India)**. This initiative aims to promote the use of zero-emission trucks to benefit both the economy and the environment.
- As part of **e-FAST India**, the **NITI GearShift Challenge** is a hackathon designed to find solutions that will speed up the adoption of electric trucks.
- e-FAST India is the first platform in India that brings together government and private sector stakeholders to develop strategies for large-scale freight electrification
- The initiative is supported by the **World Economic Forum**, CALSTART, and RMI India, and it involves various stakeholders from the freight sector.
- The urgency to reduce emissions from road freight transportation is crucial for India to meet its **2070 net-zero** commitments. Currently, **71% of freight** in India is moved by road, and this is expected to increase **five times by 2050**.

PM Colleges of Excellence

- The Union Home Minister inaugurated the **Pradhan Mantri Colleges of Excellence in Madhya Pradesh (MP)**, making **MP the first state to implement the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **About PM Colleges of Excellence:**
 - **Upgraded Standards:** These colleges have been upgraded to meet the standards set by NEP 2020.
 - **Flexible Subject Selection:** Students can choose subjects based on their interests across multiple disciplines, without the traditional stream barriers. This is known as No Compartmental Education.
 - **Diverse Focus Areas:** The curriculum includes a wide range of subjects like Biotechnology, Computer Science, Arts, and Data Analytics.

Vibrant Village Programme (VVP)

- The Union Home Minister reviewed the implementation of the **Vibrant Village Programme (VVP)**, which was approved in 2023 to ensure comprehensive development of selected villages along the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh.
- **Key Features of VVP:**
 - **Announced in Union Budget 2022-23 (till 2025-26)**
 - **Ministry of Home Affairs**
 - **Financial outlay - ₹4800 crore**
 - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**
- **Features**
 - Vibrant Village Action Plans created by district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats.
 - There will not be overlap with **Border Area Development Programme**.
- **Focus:** Development of villages on the northern border.
 - It will cover border areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh
 - It will cover 2,963 villages with 662 of them to be covered in the first phase.
- **10 identified focussed areas of interventions in these village:**

Economic Growth -
Livelihood
generation

Road Connectivity

Housing & Village
infrastructure

Energy including
renewable energy

Television and
Telecom
Connectivity

Regeneration of
eco-system

Promotion of
Tourism & culture

Financial inclusion

Skill development
& Enterpenurship

Development of co-
operative societies