

A person wearing a grey suit jacket and a blue patterned tie is pointing their right index finger at a document. The background is slightly blurred, showing the person's torso and the document they are pointing at.

# ***MOST IMPORTANT REPORTS & INDEXES***

# REPORTS

&

# INDEXES

## #GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2021

- The **World Economic Forum** has released the **Global Gender Gap Report 2021**. India has seen a decrease in its ranking on the index by 28 places.

### Key Highlights of the index

- **India has been ranked 140th among 156 countries on the index.** With this, India became the third-worst performer in South Asia. As per the index, India has closed **62.5% of its gender gap to date. In 2020, India was ranked 112th among 153 countries.**
- The decline also took place on the **economic participation and opportunity sub index**. The report highlighted that India's gender gap on this dimension widened by **3% this year, leading to a 32.6% gap closed till date.**
- Most of the decrease has been seen on the **political empowerment sub index**, where India regressed 13.5 percentage points. The women ministers have declined to 9.1% in 2021 from 23.1% in 2019).
- One of the drivers of this decline is a decrease in **women's labor force participation rate, which decreased from 24.8% to 22.3%.**
- The share of women in professional and technical roles also decreased to 29.2%. In senior and managerial positions, the share of women is also low. Only 14.6% of these positions are held by women and only 8.9% of firms are with female top managers.
- The income earned by women in India is the only 1/5th of that earned by men. This has **put India among the bottom 10 globally on this indicator.**
- Discrimination against women is also seen in the health and survival sub index statistics. With 93.7% of this gap closed to date, India has been ranked among the bottom five countries in this sub index.

The **World Economic Forum** based in Cologny, Geneva Canton, Switzerland, is an international NGO, founded on 24 January 1971. The WEF's mission is stated as "committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas". The WEF hosts an annual meeting at the end of January in Davos, a mountain resort in Graubünden, in the eastern Alps region of Switzerland. The meeting brings together some 3,000 business leaders, international political leaders, economists, celebrities and journalists for up to five days to discuss global issues, across 500 sessions. The organization also convenes some six to eight regional meetings each year in locations across Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and India and holds two further annual meetings in China and the United Arab Emirates.

### India and its Neighbours

- Among India's neighbors, **Nepal has been ranked 106, Bangladesh 65, Afghanistan 156, Pakistan 153, Sri Lanka 116, and Bhutan 130.**
- **South Asia is the second-lowest performer on the index among regions.** The region has an overall gender gap closed at 62.3%.
- In the **South Asia region**, only **two countries- Pakistan and Afghanistan** have been ranked below India. Iceland has topped the index for the 12th time and is the most gender-equal country in the world. The top 10 most gender-equal countries are **Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, Rwanda, Sweden, Ireland, and Switzerland.**

## #INEQUALITIES VIRUS REPORT: OXFAM INT.

Recently, the **Inequality Virus Report**, released by **Oxfam International**, has found that the **Covid pandemic** deeply **increased the existing inequalities** in India and around the world.

- The report states that **Covid has the potential to increase economic inequality** in almost every country at once - the first time this has happened since records began over a century ago.



### Impact of the Pandemic on Rich vis-a-vis Poor:

- India introduced one of the earliest and most **stringent lockdowns** in the face of the pandemic and its enforcement **brought the economy to a standstill, triggering unemployment, hunger, distress migration and untold hardship** in its wake.
- The **rich were able to escape** the pandemic's worst impact; and while the **white-collar workers isolated themselves and worked from home**, a majority of the **not-so-fortunate Indians lost their livelihood**.
- The **wealth of Indian billionaires increased by 35%** during the lockdown and by 90% since 2009 to USD 422.9 billion, **ranking India sixth in the world after the USA, China, Germany, Russia and France**.

### Impact on Informal Sector:

- India's large informal workforce **was the worst hit** as it made up 75% of the **122 million jobs lost**.
- Informal workers had relatively **fewer opportunities to work from home and suffered more job loss** compared to the formal sector.
- The 40-50 million **seasonal migrant workers**, typically engaged working in construction sites, factories etc. were **particularly distressed**.

### Impact on Education:

- Over the past year as **education shifted online**, India saw the **digital divide worsening inequalities**.
- On the one hand, **private providers experienced exponential growth** yet, on the other, just **3% of the poorest 20% of Indian households had access to a computer and just 9% had access to the internet**.
- It noted that **the long disruption of schooling risked doubling the rate of out of school**, especially among the poor.

### Health Inequalities:

- Oxfam found that since India does not report case data desegregated by socio-economic or social categories, it is **difficult to gauge the distribution of the disease amongst various communities**.
- India currently has the **world's second-largest cumulative number of Covid-19 positive cases** and globally, the poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities have higher rates of Covid-19 prevalence.
- The **spread of disease was swift among poor communities**, often living in cramped areas with poor sanitation and using shared common facilities such as toilets and water points.

**Sanitation Facility:**

- Only 6% of the poorest 20% households had access to non-shared sources of improved sanitation, compared to 93% of the top 20% households in India.
- In terms of caste, just 37.2% of Scheduled Castes (SCs) households and 25.9% of Scheduled Tribes (STs) households had access to non-shared sanitation facilities, compared to 65.7% for the general population.

### Gender Disparities:

- **Employment:** The unemployment rate among women rose from already high 15% before Covid to 18%. This increase in unemployment of women can result in a loss to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of about 8% or USD 218 billion. Of the women who retained their jobs, as many 83% were subjected to a cut in income according to a survey by the Institute of Social Studies Trust.
- **Health:** Beyond income and job losses, poorer women also suffered healthwise because of the disruption in regular health services and Anganwadi centres. It is predicted that the closure of family planning services will result in 2.95 million unintended pregnancies, 1.80 million abortions (including 1.04 million unsafe abortions) and 2,165 maternal deaths.
- **Domestic Violence:** The pandemic also fueled domestic violence against women. As of November 2020, cases of domestic violence rose by almost 60% over the past 12 months.

### Suggestions & Solutions

- There is an urgent need for policymakers to tax the wealthy individuals and rich corporates and use that money to invest in free quality public services and social protection to support everyone, from cradle to grave.
- Reducing inequalities is very important but it should be a medium-term target. Between growth and distribution, India must get the sequencing right.

India needs to grow first before it can distribute. Otherwise, it can get stuck in a low-income equilibrium

## #INDIA INNOVATION INDEX BY NITI AAYOG

The NITI Aayog is to launch the second edition of India Innovation Index. The Index ranks states of the country based on how they support innovation. The first edition of India Innovation Index was launched in 2019.

### About India Innovation Index

- The India Innovation Index was developed on the lines of Global Innovation Index. It attempts to create an extensive framework for the continuous evaluation of the innovation environment of the states and union territories in India.
- The index is calculated as the average of scores of two dimensions namely enablers and performance. The enablers provide the innovative capacities of the states and the performers give the benefits derived by the nation from the state's innovation.
- The enablers are human capital, investment, business environment, knowledge workers and safety and legal environment. The performance parameters are knowledge diffusion and knowledge output.





### Importance of India Innovation Index

- India has huge opportunities and potential to become the innovation leader of the world. The Innovation Index will act as an evaluator of innovation in the country.
- This will help to **channelize the improvement of innovation environment**. Also, it will promote competitive federalism among the states.

### India Innovation Index, 2019

- **Karnataka emerged as the topper in overall rankings** in the category of major states in India Innovation Index, 2019. **Maharashtra** performed the best in the **dimension of Enablers**.
- **Sikkim** topped the ranking in **north eastern states** category and **Delhi** topped the list in the category of **Union Territories**.

### Conclusion

- There is a need to **improve the capability of top rung education institutions** in the country to produce greater innovation outputs.
- Also, the spending on **research and development** should be increased with greater collaboration between the **educational institutions and industries**. A collaborative platform with innovators, investors and researchers will strengthen **industry-academia linkages and will ease the technology transfer processes**.

### #FAO'S FOOD PRICE INDEX 2020

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index averaged **107.5 points** in **December 2020**, up **2.3 points** from November 2020. This marks the **seventh month of consecutive increase**.

#### About the Index:

- It was **introduced in 1996** as a public good to help in monitoring developments in the **global agricultural commodity markets**.
- The **FAO Food Price Index (FFPI)** is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities.
- It measures changes for a **basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar**.
- **Base Period: 2014-16**.

#### About the Food and Agriculture Organization:

- FAO is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- **World Food Day** is celebrated every year around the world on **16<sup>th</sup> October**. The day is celebrated to mark the **anniversary of the founding of the FAO in 1945**.
- **India** released a **commemorative coin of Rs. 75 denomination** to mark the **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the FAO** (16<sup>th</sup> October 2020).
- It is **one of the UN food aid organisations based in Rome (Italy)**. Its sister bodies are the **World Food Programme** and the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**.

#### Initiatives Taken:

- **Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)**.
- Monitors the **Desert Locust situation** throughout the world.
- The **Codex Alimentarius Commission or CAC** is the body responsible for all matters regarding the implementation of the **Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme**.

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- The **International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture** was adopted by the Thirty-First Session of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization in 2001.

### Flagship Publications:

- **The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA).**
- **The State of the World's Forests (SOFO).**
- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI).
- **The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA).**
- **The State of Agricultural Commodity Markets (SOCO).**

## #INDIA RANKED 4<sup>TH</sup> IN GLOBAL FIREPOWER INDEX

- The **Global Firepower Index** ranks the countries based on their **potential military strength**. India was **ranked fourth in the index**. The Global Firepower Index ranked **138 countries**.
- The countries were evaluated based on **prolonged offensive and defensive military campaigns**.



### Rankings in the index

- The **United States topped the index with 904 attack helicopters** and eleven aircraft carriers. Also, the country has **sixty-eight submarines and 40,000 armoured fighting vehicles**.
- The **US was followed by Russia with 189 fighter aircrafts** and 538 attack helicopters. Russia has 13,000 tanks and 64 submarines.
- **China was ranked third with 1,200 combat aircrafts and 327 attack helicopters** and seventy-nine submarines. Also, China has 35,000 armoured vehicles.
- **India was ranked fourth in the Global Firepower Index with 542 combat aircraft, 17 submarines, 4,730 tanks and 37 attack helicopters.**
- **Japan was ranked fifth** in the Global Firepower Index with **2 helicopter carriers, 27 destroyers**. **South Korea was ranked sixth** in the world and North Korea was ranked 28<sup>th</sup>.

### About Global Firepower Index, 2021

- The **Global Firepower Index** is calculated **using fifty individual factors** from geography to logistical capability. It also includes **manpower, land forces, airpower, natural resources, naval forces, logistics and financials**.
- Under manpower, the factors considered are total population, paramilitary, reaching military age annually, active reserves and active services.
- **Under equipment, the factors considered** are trainer fleet, aircraft fleet strength, helicopter fleet, attack fleets, rocket projectors, tank strength, towed artillery, aircraft carriers, naval fleet strength, destroyers, submarines, coastal patrol craft, frigates, mine warfare craft, coastal patrol craft and tanker fleets. The finance factors include external debt, defence budget, reserves of foreign exchange and gold and purchasing power parity.

## Position of Pakistan

- **Pakistan was ranked the tenth most powerful country** in the Global Firepower Index. Pakistan has surpassed **Israel, Indonesia, Iran and Canada in terms of military power.**

## #INDIA RANKED 85<sup>TH</sup> HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX

The **Henley Passport Index** was launched by the **International Air Transport Association**. Around 227 different travel destinations are considered to launch the index. The index is released based on the number of destinations the holders can access without visa.

### Henley Passport Index 2021

- **Nepal at rank 104 and Pakistan at 107** continue to be the **"Worst passports to hold" category.** **Pakistan had a visa-free score of 32 countries** and Nepal had a score of 38 countries.
- The countries such as **Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria** were the countries with the **worst passport to hold with a score of 26, 28 and 29.**
- The report said that **Japanese citizens can travel to 191 countries and Japan was the top performer.**
- Singapore was in second position with a score of 190. **South Korea and Germany were at third position with a score of 189.**
- Countries such as **UK, USA, New Zealand and Switzerland** were at the seventh position. They are considered as the most powerful passports in the world. Their score was 185. Australia was at eighth position with a score of 184.
- **India ranked 85<sup>th</sup> in the Henley Passport Index.** India scored **58 in the Henley Passport Index.**

The **International Air Transport Association** is a trade association of the world's airlines founded in 1945. IATA has been described as a cartel since, in addition to setting technical standards for airlines, IATA also organized tariff conferences that served as a forum for price fixing. Consisting in 2016 of 290 airlines, primarily major carriers, **representing 117 countries, the IATA's member airlines** account for carrying approximately 82% of total available seat miles air traffic. **IATA supports airline activity** and helps formulate industry policy and standards. It is headquartered in Canada in the city of Montréal, with executive office in Geneva.

### What is new about Henley Passport Index, 2021?

- Over the past sixteen years, the top positions of Henley Passport Index were taken by the **European Union countries, USA and UK**. This year, the Asia Pacific countries have become the top performers.
- **Passport Index:** The Passport Index is an online tool. It provides insights about visa-free travel option. The Passport Index includes **World Openness score, Visa-free scores and Global mobility scores.**
- **Visa free destinations:** There are 58 destinations in the world that does not require prior visa. Of **these twenty are in Africa and eleven are in Asia.**



## #ASIA PACIFIC PERSONALIZED HEALTH INDEX

**Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index** was recently released by the **Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)**. The index measures the readiness in adopting the **personalised healthcare of 11 health systems in the Asia-Pacific region**.

### Asia-Pacific Personalised Health Index

- This is a **newly launched index**. It measures the progress of a health system towards personalised healthcare.
- It evaluated the **11 health systems in the Asia-Pacific region**.
- The health systems that were evaluated includes: **India, China, Singapore, Australia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, and New Zealand**.



- It measured the performance **across 27 indicators of the personalised health** across 4 categories that are called as the **'Vital Signs'**.
- The four vital signs include **Policy Context, Health Information, Personalised Technologies and Health Services**.

### Key Findings of the report

- Report highlights that **Singapore was the best performer** among all the 11 health systems.
- Taiwan bagged the second position while Japan, and Australia stands at the third and the fourth position of the index respectively.
- **India was ranked at 10<sup>th</sup> position out of 11 health systems**.
- Indonesia was ranked last at **11<sup>th</sup>**

### India's rank

- Though, India **was ranked at 10<sup>th</sup> position overall**. But in the four vital categories **India's rank is- 10<sup>th</sup> in the health information indicator**, 11<sup>th</sup> in the health services, 9<sup>th</sup> in the Personalised Technologies indicator while 5<sup>th</sup> in the Policy Context indicator.

### Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)

- It is the research and analysis division of Economist Group. It provides the forecasting and advisory services by doing research and analysis.
- It provides- five-year country economic forecasts, monthly country reports, country risk service reports and industry reports. It has several offices **across the world including two offices in China and one in Hong Kong.**

### #RELIANCE JIO 5<sup>TH</sup> STRONGEST BRAND GLOBALLY

- The **Reliance Jio venture of billionaire Mukesh Ambani** has become **the fifth strongest brand globally**. It now stands behind the brands like Ferrari and Coca-Cola. This venture has achieved this milestone in just four-odd-years.



#### Key points about the report

- This ranking has been provided by the **"Brand Finance Global 500 ranking 2021"** of the strongest brands. This ranking determines the relative strength of brands.
- As per the annual report on most valuable and strongest global brands has been topped by **WeChat**. The **Reliance Jio was founded in 2016** and has become the largest mobile network operator in India. It has also become the third-largest mobile network operator in the world.
- The **network operator has almost 400 million subscribers, as of now**. The brand **Ferrari is ranked second, Russian bank Sber is ranked third** while Coca-Cola is ranked fourth.
- **Reliance Jio** has got the BSI score of 91.7 out of 100 and is given **elite AAA+ brand strength rating**.

#### How this ranking was decided?

- The assessment of stakeholder equity was done through the original market research data. The **data was analysed for over 50,000 respondents in 30 countries and across 20 sectors.**

#### Reliance Jio

- It is **an Indian telecommunications company and a subsidiary of Jio Platforms**. It is headquartered in Mumbai, Maharashtra. The company operates a national LTE network and is covering all the 22 telecom circles. The operator does not provide 2G or 3G service.
- It only uses voice over **LTE to provide the voice service on its 4G network**. It was launched in December 2015 with a beta for partners and employees. In September 2016 it was launched for public. Jio also launched a fiber to the **home service which offers broadband, television, and telephone services**.
- **Brand Finance**: It is an independent branded business valuation consultancy that advises branded organizations on how to maximize their value through effective management.

### #2020 WORST YEAR ON RECORD: UNWTO

- The **UN World Tourism Organization** recently confirmed the **Year 2020** as the '**worst year on record**', after global tourism suffered massively due to international travel bans implemented to contain the COVID-19 outbreak.
- The **international arrivals dropped by 74 percent** and destinations **across the world welcomed 1 billion fewer international arrivals than 2019** due to widespread travel restrictions and unprecedented fall in demand.



- As per the latest report by the **UN World Tourism Organization**, the collapse in international travel has represented an **estimated loss of USD 1.3 trillion in export revenues**, which is more than 11 times the loss recorded during the 2009 global economic crisis.

### Report of UNWTO

- The **UNWTO report** noted that the **COVID-19 crisis** has put almost **100-120 million direct tourism jobs at risk**, many of them in small and medium-sized enterprises.
- The report further stated that due to the evolving nature of the pandemic, many countries are now reintroducing stricter travel restrictions.
- The **restrictions include quarantine rules, mandatory testing and complete closure of borders** in some cases. At the same time, the report noted that the gradual rollout of a COVID-19 vaccine is expected to help restore consumer confidence and contribute to the easing travel restrictions, slowly leading normalisation of travel during the year ahead.

### Tourism rebound in 2021?

- The **UNWTO Panel of Experts survey** displays a **mixed outlook for 2021**. Almost half of the respondents (45%) had envisaged better prospects for 2021 in comparison to last year and 25 per cent expect similar performance and 30 per cent foresee worsening of results in 2021.
- Overall, the **prospects of tourism rebound in 2021 look to have worsened**. At least 50 percent of

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respondents **expect a rebound only in 2022 as compared to 21 per cent** in October 2020. The remaining still see a potential rebound in 2021.

- According to **UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili**, while much has been done to make safe international travel a possibility, we are aware that the crisis is far from over. He stated that the coordination, and digitalization of **COVID-19 travel-related risk reduction measures**, including testing, tracing and vaccination certificates, are essential foundations to promote safe travel and prepare for the **recovery of tourism once conditions allow.**"

### #IEA RELEASED INDIA ENERGY OUTLOOK

Recently, the **International Energy Agency (IEA)** has released the **India Energy Outlook 2021 Report** which explores the opportunities and challenges ahead for India as it seeks to ensure reliable, affordable and sustainable energy for a growing population.

- The India Energy Outlook 2021 is a **new special report from the IEA's World Energy Outlook series.**

### Third Largest Energy Consumer by 2030:

- India will **make up the biggest share of energy demand growth at 25%** over the next two decades, as it **overtakes the European Union as the world's third-biggest energy consumer by 2030.**
- Presently, **India is the fourth-largest global energy consumer behind China, the United States and the European Union.**
- India's **energy consumption is expected to nearly double** as the nation's **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** expands to an estimated USD 8.6 trillion by 2040 under its current national policy scenario.
- **Prior to the global pandemic**, India's energy demand was **projected to increase** by almost **50% between 2019 and 2030**, but growth over this period is **now closer to 35%.**
- **Industrialisation is a Major Driving Force:** Over the last three decades, India accounted for about **10% of World Growth in Industrial Value-added [in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms].**
- **By 2040**, India is set to account for almost **20% of Global Growth in Industrial value-added**, and to lead global growth in industrial final energy consumption, especially in steelmaking.

The International Energy Agency is an **autonomous Intergovernmental Organisation** established in 1974 in Paris, France. IEA mainly focuses on its energy policies which include **economic development, energy security and environmental protection.** These policies are also known as the 3 E's of IEA. India became an **Associate member of IEA in March 2017** but it was in engagement with IEA long before its association with the organization. Recently, India has **inked a Strategic Partnership Agreement with the IEA** to strengthen cooperation in global energy security, stability and sustainability. **The World Energy Outlook Report** is released by the IEA annually.

### Reliance on Imports:

- India's growing energy needs will make it **more reliant on fossil fuel imports** as its **domestic oil and gas production has been stagnant** for years despite government policies to promote petroleum exploration and production and renewable energy.
- Rising oil demand **could double India's oil import bill** to about USD 181 billion by 2030 and nearly treble it to USD 255 billion by 2040 compared with 2019.

## Oil & Gas Demand:

- India's **oil demand** is seen **rising by 74% to 8.7 million barrels per day by 2040** under the existing policies scenario.
- A **five-fold increase in per capita car ownership** will result in India leading the oil demand growth in the world.
- Its **net dependence on oil imports** - taking into account both the import of crude oil and the export of oil products - **increases to more than 90% by 2040 from the current 75%** as domestic consumption rises much more than production.
- India will become the **fastest-growing market for Natural gas**, with demand **more than tripling by 2040**. Natural gas **import dependency** increased from **20% in 2010** to almost **50% in 2019** and is set to grow further to **more than 60% in 2040**.
- Coal Demand:** Coal currently dominates India's electricity sector, accounting for over 70% of overall generation.
- Coal demand** is seen **rising to 772 million tonnes in 2040** from the **current 590**.
- Renewables Energy Resources Demand:** India's share in the **growth in renewable energy** is the **second-largest** in the world, after China.

## Conclusion

- As the world seeks ways to accelerate the pace of transformation in the energy sector, **India is in a unique position to pioneer a new model for low-carbon, inclusive growth**. If this can be done, it will show the way for a whole group of energy-hungry developing economies, by demonstrating that **robust economic expansion is fully compatible with an increasing pace of emissions reductions** and the achievement of other development goals.
- India is already a global leader in solar power, and **solar combined with batteries will play a massive part in India's energy future**. But India will need a whole host of technologies and policies to chart this new path.
- As new industrial sectors emerge and clean energy jobs grow, India will also need to ensure that **no one is left behind, including in those regions that are heavily dependent on coal today**.

## #FREEDOM IN THE WORLD REPORT 2021

- The **Freedom in the World 2021** report has downgraded India's status from '**Free**' to '**Partly Free**'.
- Pointing to a decline in global democracy over the last 15 years, the report said that nearly **75% of the world's population lived in a country that faced deterioration** over the last year.
- The **most free countries** in the world, with a score of 100, are **Finland, Norway and Sweden**, while the **least free** with a score of 1 are **Tibet and Syria**.

## About the Report:

- Published By: **USA based human rights watchdog Freedom House, which is largely funded through USA government grants, has been tracking the course of democracy since 1941.**
- Scores are Based on: **Political rights indicators such as the electoral process, political pluralism and participation and government functioning.**
- Civil liberties indicators related to freedom of expression and belief, associational and organisational rights, the rule of law and personal autonomy and individual rights.**
- Countries are declared as "free", "partly free" or "not free".**



- India's Score: **India's** score was 67, a drop from 71/100 from last year (**reflecting 2019 data**) **downgrading it from the free category last year (i.e., based on 2020 data).**

### Reasons for India's Fall:

- Freedom of Media:** Attacks on press freedom have escalated dramatically, and reporting has become significantly less ambitious in recent years, citing the use of **security, defamation, sedition and contempt of court** laws to quiet critical media voices.
- Elevation of Hindu Nationalist Interests:** India appears to have abandoned its potential to serve as a global democratic leader, **elevating narrow Hindu nationalist interests** at the expense of its founding values of inclusion and equal rights for all.
- Internet Freedom:** In a year when **social media** censorship has been hotly seated, while the government shut down **Internet connectivity in Kashmir** as well as on Delhi's borders, **India's Internet freedom score dropped to just 51.**

### Covid Response:

- Response to **Covid-19** included a hamfisted lockdown that resulted in the dangerous and unplanned **displacement of millions of internal migrant workers.**
- It added that **Muslims were disproportionately blamed** for the spread of the virus and faced attacks by vigilante mobs.
- Crackdown on Protesters:** The government intensified its crackdown on protesters opposed to a discriminatory **citizenship law** and arrested dozens of journalists who aired criticism of the official pandemic response.
- Laws:** **Uttar Pradesh's law prohibiting forced religious conversion** through interfaith marriage was also listed as a concern.

## #FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT BY UNEP

- Recently, the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** released the **Food Waste Index Report 2021.**
- It has revealed that **17% of all food available at consumer level** (11% in households, 5% in food service and 2% in retail) **was wasted** in 2019 and around 690 million people had to go hungry.



### About the Report:

- It presents the most comprehensive **food waste data collection, analysis and modelling to date**, generating a new estimate of **global food waste.**
- It also **publishes** a methodology for countries to measure food waste, at household, food service and retail level, to track national progress towards 2030.
- In contrast to the **Food Loss Index**, the Food Waste Index measures total food waste (rather than loss or waste associated with specific commodities).

### Findings of the report

- Food Wastage:** This report estimates that around **931 million tonnes of food waste** was generated in 2019. 61% of which came from households, 26% from food service and 13% from retail.

- **Wastages Across All Income Groups:** Food waste generation is found to be equally relevant across all income countries such as high, upper-middle and lower-middle income countries.
- Developed Countries like **Austria** produce very low amounts of waste at 39 kg/capita/year. On the other hand, countries like **Nigeria** are producing waste at 189 kg/capita/year. For **India**, the waste in kg/capita/year was 50.
- This diverges from earlier narratives concentrating **consumer food waste in developed countries**, and **food production, storage and transportation losses in developing countries**.
- **Lack of Data Availability:** Global food waste data availability is currently low, and measurement approaches have been highly variable.

### Significance of Reduction of Food Waste:

- **Reduce Hunger:** Reducing food waste can slow the destruction of nature through land conversion and pollution, enhance the availability of food and thus reduce hunger and save money at a time of global recession.
- **Aligned with SDGs:** This Food Waste Index Report aims to advance progress on **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 12.3)**, i.e. "By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses".
- **Tackle GHG Emissions:** About 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions are associated with food that is not consumed. Thus, tackling food wastage issues can further achieve **Paris Agreement** targets.

### Suggestions by the Report:

- **Enhancing NDCs (Nationally Determined Contributions) for Food Systems:** To raise ambition in national climate strategies by integrating food loss and waste, and strengthen food security.
- Co-create and adopt game-changing solutions to food waste through the **UN Food Systems Summit**.
- **Regional Food Waste Working Group:** These Working Groups will provide capacity building and training to participating Member States in measuring food waste, developing a national baseline and designing national strategies for food waste prevention.

### UN Food Systems Summit

- In 2021, UN Secretary-General António Guterres will convene a Food Systems Summit as part of the **Decade of Action** to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.
- The Summit will launch bold new actions to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs, each of which relies to some degree on healthier, more sustainable and equitable food systems.

### Food Loss Index

- The Food Loss Index (FLI) **focuses on food losses** that occur from **production up to (and not including) the retail level**.
- It measures the changes in percentage losses for a basket of 10 main commodities by country in comparison with a base period.
- The FLI contributes to measure progress towards **SDG Target 12.3**.

### #WB RELEASED WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021

Recently, the **World Bank** has published the **World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives**.

- The World Development Report 2021 provides a blueprint on **how to harness the power of data for development**, to ensure no one is left behind.
- **The Social Contract For Data:** To get more value out of data while protecting people against harm and ensuring access and representation. Different data-creating and data-using parties need to safely collaborate.
- The three elements of a social contract for data: **Value, Equity and Trust**.



### Data As a Force For Public Good:

- **Public intent data** - data collected with the intent of serving the public good by informing the design, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of public programs and policies - are a prerequisite for many government functions.
- Public intent data can bring value to development through several pathways, such as **holding governments accountable and empowering individuals, improving service delivery, and prioritizing scarce resources**.
- **Infinite Possibilities:** Repurposing and integrating public- and private-intent data can help provide **real-time and finer-scale insights, fill data gaps**, and overcome limitations associated with each data type.
- **Improving Data Systems:** Fully harnessing the value of data requires building an **Integrated National Data System (INDS)**.
- INDS is a way of countries realizing the potential of data for development, using the principles of the social contract as a blueprint.
- The INDS framework allows a country to share data between national participants safely while maximizing the benefit equitably.

### Issues Flagged by the Report:

- **Not A Leveling Playing Field:** An explosion of **data platform** businesses is raising concern about competition and posing new challenges for regulation.
- **Data Platform:** It is an integrated technology solution that allows data located in databases to be governed, accessed, and delivered to users, data applications, or other technologies for strategic business purposes.
- **Lack of Open Data:** Only 11% low-income countries make their data **open (Not Accessible To General Public or research institution)**, the report flagged.
- The comparable rate for lower-middle-income countries was 19%, for upper-middle-income countries 22% and high-income countries 44%.
- **Gaps in Data on Women and Girls** are particularly severe: Only 10 of the 54 gender-specific indicators (19%) in the **United Nations-mandated sustainable development goals (SDGs)** were widely available.
- **Data Infrastructural Gaps:** There are major gaps evident between rich and poor people on broadband connectivity, and a substantial divide emerging between rich and poor countries when it comes to the availability of data infrastructure.

## Data Gaps In India:

- Echoed concerns on assessment of global poverty by the World Bank, which has been skewed due to **absence of data on poverty from India**.
- India **monitors 54 out of the 130 SDG indicators**. While the overall number of monitored indicators has gone up, the country has dropped four indicators from its tracking list.
- The report called for **strategic repurposing of existing data**.

## #JEFF BEZOS TOPPED THE FORBES LIST

- **Forbes recently revealed its 35th annual list of the world's richest people**. The billionaires list, which is one of the biggest ever, includes 2755 billionaires, 660 more than last year.
- **Forbes billionaires list 2021 includes 493 new additions** including production powerhouse Tyler Perry and Kanye West and Kim Kardashian.
- **Amazon's CEO Jeff Bezos** continued to top the list with a **net worth of \$177 billion, making him the world's richest person for the fourth year running**.



## Key Highlights

- **Overall, around 724 Billionaires** in the list belong to the **United States, followed by China that includes Macao and Hong Kong with 698 Billionaires**.
- **Elon Musk**, who had **surpassed Bezos briefly during 2020** as Tesla stock surged, is ranked at the second position with a net worth of \$151 billion.
- **Bernard Arnault** and his family is at the third place with a **net worth of \$150 billion**. Arnault oversees the French fashion empire LVMH, which **includes brands like Louis Vuitton and Sephora**.
- The **world's richest woman is Francoise Bettencourt Meyers & family**, who is placed at no. 12 with a net worth of \$73.6 billion. Bettencourt Meyers is the granddaughter of the founder of L'Oreal.
- The **youngest billionaire on the list is 18-year-old Kevin David Lehmann**, who with a net worth of \$3.3 billion is placed 925th on the list. **He owns 50% of Germany's leading drugstore chain, dm (drogeriemarkt)**.
- **Former US President Donald Trump** is placed at No. 1,299 in the Forbes list with \$2.4 billion, down from No. 1,001 last year.
- **Michael Bloomberg** is placed at 20th position with a **net worth of \$59 billion**, while Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey is at no. 173 with a \$12.5 billion net worth.
- **Media mogul Rupert Murdoch and family** is placed at no. 71 on the list with a net worth of \$23.5 billion. Popular reality TV host **Oprah Winfrey is placed at no. 1174 with a net worth of \$2.7 billion**.
- **Kanye West** is placed at no. 1,750 with a net worth of \$1.8 billion, **while his soon-to-be-ex-wife, Kim Kardashian** is placed at no. 2,674 with a net worth of around \$1 billion.

## India's Richest Person

- The **Chairman of Reliance Industries, Mukesh Ambani** is the richest Indian in the Forbes list of richest billionaires with a **net worth of \$84.5 billion**.
- **Adani Group Chief, Gautam Adani** is the **second richest Indian on the Forbes list**, while HCL founder Shiv Nadar is the third richest Indian on the list. The **total numbers of Indian billionaires have** risen to 140 this year, from 120 last year, as per Forbes.

| Rank | Name            | Net Worth      | Company   | Country |
|------|-----------------|----------------|---|---------|
| 1    | Jeff Bezos      | \$177 Billion  | Amazon  | US      |
| 2    | Elon Musk       | \$151 Billion  | Space X, Tesla                                  | US      |
| 3    | Bernard Arnault | \$150 Billion  | CEO of LVMH Moët<br>Hennessy – Louis<br>Vuitton | France  |
| 4    | Bill Gates      | \$124 Billion  | Founder of<br>Microsoft                         | US      |
| 5    | Mark Zuckerberg | \$97 Billion   | Facebook CEO                                    | US      |
| 6    | Warren Buffett  | \$96 Billion   | Berkshire<br>Hathaway Founder                   | US      |
| 7    | Larry Ellison   | \$93 Billion   | Oracle Founder                                  | US      |
| 8    | Larry Page      | \$91.5 Billion | Google co-founder                               | US      |
| 9    | Sergey Brin     | \$89 Billion   | Google co-founder                               | US      |
| 10   | Mukesh Ambani   | \$84.5 Billion | Reliance Group<br>Chairman                      | India   |



## #STATE OF THE GLOBAL CLIMATE REPORT BY WMO

Recently, the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** released its annual **State of the Global Climate for 2020**.

- The report was released ahead of the **Leaders Summit on Climate**, hosted by the US.
- Extreme weather combined with **Covid-19** was a double blow for millions of people in 2020. However, the **pandemic-related economic slowdown failed to put a brake on climate change drivers and accelerating impacts**.



### Global Temperature:

- 2020 was one of the three warmest years on record, despite a cooling **La Niña** event.
- The global average temperature was about **1.2° Celsius above the pre-industrial (1850-1900) level**. The other two warmest years are **2016** and **2019**.
- The **six years since 2015 have been the warmest on record**. **2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record**.
- **Greenhouse Gases:** Emission of major greenhouse gases increased in 2019 and 2020. It will be **higher in 2021**. Concentrations of the major greenhouse gases in the air **continued to increase in 2019 and 2020**.
- Globally, averaged **mole fractions** of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) have already exceeded 410 parts per million (ppm), and if the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration follows the same pattern as in previous years, it could reach or exceed 414 ppm in 2021.
- **Mole fraction** represents the **number of molecules of a particular component in a mixture divided by the total number of moles** in the given mixture. It's a way of expressing the concentration of a solution.
- **Oceans:** In 2019, the oceans had the **highest heat content** on record. In 2020, it has broken this record further. Over **80% of the ocean area experienced at least one marine heatwave in 2020**.
- A marine heatwave is defined when **seawater temperatures exceed a seasonally-varying threshold for at least 5 consecutive days**.
- The percentage of the ocean that experienced **"strong" marine heat waves (45%)** was greater than that which experienced **"moderate" marine heat waves (28%)**.

### Sea-level Rise:

- Since record-taking started in 1993 using the satellite altimeter, sea-level has been rising. It is **due to the La Niña induced cooling**.
- Sea level has recently been rising at a higher rate **partly due to the increased melting of the ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica**.

### The Arctic and the Antarctica:

- In 2020, the **Arctic sea-ice extent came down to second lowest on record**.

- The 2020 minimum extent was **3.74 million square kilometre**, marking **only the second time** (after 2012) **on record that it shrank to less than 4 million sq km**.
- In a large region of the Siberian Arctic, **temperatures in 2020 were more than 3°C above average**. A record temperature of 38°C was noted in the town of **Verkhoyansk, Russia**.
- The **Antarctic sea-ice extent remained close to the long-term average**.
- However, the Antarctic ice sheet has exhibited a strong mass loss trend since the late 1990s.
- This trend accelerated around 2005, and **currently, Antarctica loses approximately 175 to 225 Gigaton per year**, due to the increasing flow rates of major **glaciers** in West Antarctica and the Antarctic Peninsula.

### Extreme Weather Events in India:

- India **experienced one of its wettest monsoons since 1994**, with a seasonal surplus of 9% that led to **severe floods and landslides**.
- **Cyclone Amphan**, which hit Kolkata in May 2020, has been named as the **costliest tropical cyclone for the North Indian Ocean region** that brought about an estimated loss of USD 14 billion.

### Climatic Impact:

- **Extreme Weather Situations:** Along with the pandemic, people across the world struggled to survive as they faced extreme weather in the form of storms, cyclones, heavy rainfall and record heat.
- **Response and recovery** to people hit by cyclones, storms and similar extreme weather was **constrained throughout the pandemic in 2020**.
- **Human Mobility Issues:** Mobility restrictions and economic downturns owing to Covid-19 **slowed down delivery of humanitarian assistance** to vulnerable and displaced populations, who live in dense settlements.
- The **pandemic added further dimension to human mobility concerns**, highlighting the need for an integrated approach to understanding and addressing climate risk and impact on vulnerable populations.

## #WORLD IN 2030: REPORT BY UNESCO

The **World in 2030: Public Survey Report** was **recently published by UNESCO**. The report was published by the organization based on the survey held between May 2020 and September 2020. The survey collected responses from more than 15,000 people from all over the world.

### Key Findings of the Report

- **According to the report, Climate Change, Violence and Conflict, Loss of Biodiversity** and discrimination and inequality, water and housing, lack of food are the four biggest challenges to peaceful societies of 2030.
- According to the participants, education is the only crucial solution to many difficulties to be faced in 2030. However, the **North Americans (US, Canada) believe in science and not in education**.
- Apart from education, the only other solution is international cooperation.



## Challenges related to it:

- The top challenges to be faced in 2030 according to the report are as follows:
  - Violence and Conflict
  - Discrimination and Inequality
  - Disinformation and Freedom of Expression
  - Climate Change and Loss of Biodiversity
  - Lack of food, water and housing
  - Health and Disease
  - Lack of Decent work and opportunities
  - Political Participation and Democratic Principles
  - Artificial Intelligence and New Technologies
  - Traditions and Culture at risk
- Climate change and biodiversity loss were the top concern in the Asia and Pacific region. The Asia Pacific respondents of the survey highlighted natural disaster risk, localised impacts and importance of culture as the other major challenges. The top solutions to address the concerns in Asia Pacific are as follows:
  - Effective Health education
  - Sharing of research and scientific knowledge
  - Effective international cooperation
  - Ensuring a health relationship with nature
  - Ensuring access to reliable and accurate information
- The top challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa, Arab states, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean was also Climate change and biodiversity.

## #WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

India has ranked 142<sup>nd</sup> yet again out of 180 nations in the recently unveiled World Press Freedom Index.

- The index is published each year by the international journalism not-for-profit body, **Reporters without Borders (RSF)**.

### About the World Press Freedom Index:

- It has been published every year since 2002 by **Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF)** or Reporters Without Borders.
- Based in Paris, RSF is an independent NGO with consultative status with the **United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF)**.
  - OIF is a 54 french speaking nations collective.
- The Index ranks countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists. However it is not an indicator on the quality of journalism.



- The **parameters include** pluralism, media independence, media environment and self-censorship, legislative framework, transparency, and the quality of the infrastructure that supports the production of news and information.

### Global Scenario:

- **Journalism**, the main vaccine against disinformation, is **completely or partly blocked in 73% of the 180 countries**.
- **Only 12 of the Index's 180 countries (7%)** can claim to **offer a favourable environment for journalism**.
- **Covid-19 pandemic** has been used to perfection by nations to control the spread of information. The Report has **raised concern about the larger Asia-Pacific region** as several nations in an attempt to curb freedom of press have in place **draconian laws on 'sedition,' 'state secrets' and 'national security'**.
- **Norway has topped** yet again for the fifth year in the row, **followed by Finland and Denmark**.
- **Eritrea is at the bottom** meanwhile **China is ranked 177**, and is only above North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178.

### India's Performance Analysis:

- India **was ranked 142 in the year 2020 as well**, thus showing no improvement in the environment it provides to its journalists.
- India **has fared poorly amongst its neighbours** with Nepal at 106, Sri Lanka at 127 and Bhutan at 65. Pakistan is a close follower at 145th spot.
- India is **among the countries classified "bad" for journalism** and is termed as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their jobs properly.
- The report has blamed **an environment of intimidation created by the nationalist government for any critical journalist** often brandishing them as anti state or anti national.
- The **situation is worrying in Kashmir**, where incidents of harassment of reporters by police and paramilitaries have surfaced.
- **Reasons Behind India's Poor Performance:**
- **Journalists are exposed to every kind of attack**, including police violence against reporters, ambushes by political activists, and reprisals instigated by criminal groups or corrupt local officials.
- The journalists **have often been subjected to coordinated hate campaigns** on social networks. Such campaigns are **particularly violent when the targets are women**.

### Freedom of Press

- The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, guarantees **freedom of speech and expression under Article 19**, which deals with 'Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.
- Freedom of press is not expressly protected by Indian legal system but it is **impliedly protected under article 19(1) (a) of the constitution**, which states - "All citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression".
- In 1950, the Supreme Court in **RomeshThappar v. State of Madras** observed that freedom of the press lay at the foundation of all democratic organisations.



- However, Freedom of press is also **not absolute**. It faces certain restrictions under Article 19(2), which are as follows-
- Matters related to interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

### #INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT 2021

The **US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)** has recommended for the second year in the row to put India on a list ('Countries of Particular Concern' or **CPCs**) for the worst violations of religious freedoms in 2020.

- Earlier, the US State Department, in its **2020 Human Rights Report**, pointed out several Human Rights Issues in India.

#### About the USCIRF:

- USCIRF is an **independent, bipartisan US federal government commission**, dedicated to defending the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad. It is an **advisory body to the US Congress**.
- **USCIRF's 2021 Annual Report** assesses religious freedom violations and progress during calendar year 2020 in 26 countries and makes independent recommendations for US policy. It is **Headquartered at Washington DC**.



#### About the Report:

- The Report's **primary focus is on two groups of countries:**
- **"Country of Particular Concern (CPC)"** is a designation by the US Secretary of State of a nation engaged in severe violations of religious freedom under **IRFA (International Religious Freedom Act of 1998)**.
- A **"Special Watch List" country** is one that is deemed not to meet all of the CPC criteria but engages in or tolerates severe violations of religious freedom.
- The Report also includes **USCIRF's recommendations of violent nonstate actors for designation by the US State Department as "entities of particular concern," or EPCs, under IRFA.**

#### Latest Recommendations of USCIRF:

- For the CPC List: **Recommendations for the CPC list are Russia, Syria and Vietnam and India.**
- Countries already on the CPCs list and recommended by USCIRF for re-designation are **Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.**
- For A Special Watch List: **Afghanistan, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Turkey and Uzbekistan are recommended for a 'Special Watch List', along with Cuba and Nicaragua, both of which were already on the list for 2019.**



- For EPCs: **Recommends** seven non-state actors for redesignation as “entities of particular concern” (EPCs)—al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, the Houthis, Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Jamaat Nasr al-Islam walMuslimin (JNIM), and the Taliban.

### India’s Case

- **Areas of Concern Highlighted: Passage of the Religiously Discriminatory Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA):** CAA fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim refugees from South Asian countries meeting certain other criteria.
- **Delhi Riots:** The report mentions the attack that took place on religious minorities during Delhi riots by the religious majority population in February 2020.
- **National Register of Citizens (NRC):** The consequences of exclusion – as exemplified by a large detention camp being built in Assam – are potentially devastating.
- **Anti-Conversion Laws:** Despite India’s constitutional protections for religious freedom, **approximately one-third of India’s 28 states limit or prohibit religious conversion** to protect the dominant religion from perceived threats from religious minorities.
- **Disinformation and Incitement of Violence:** Government officials and nonstate actors **continued to use social media and other forms of communication to harass and spread hatred and disinformation** against minority communities, including Muslims, Christians, and Dalits.
- The **fervor around cow slaughter continues** to take root in policy, in December, the state of Karnataka revised an earlier bill to impose fines and imprisonment for the transport, sale, and purchase of cattle for slaughter.
- **Religious Freedom in Jammu and Kashmir:** In Muslim-majority **Jammu and Kashmir**, restrictions on freedom of movement and assembly negatively impacted religious freedom, including the observance of religious holy days and the ability to attend prayers.
- The **shutdown of the internet for nearly 18 months**—the longest-ever shutdown in any democracy—and other restrictions on communications caused significant disruption and limited religious freedom.
- **Closing Space for Civil Society:** Government officials used the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)** and other statutes to detain advocates, media, and academics, including religious minorities.
- In September 2020, the **FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act)** was amended to place further restrictions on NGOs, including reducing the amount of foreign funds that could be used for administrative expenses and requiring that accounts be held in a government-designated bank.

### Recommendations of USCIRF:

- It has recommended the US administration **to impose targeted sanctions on Indian individuals and entities** for ‘severe violations of religious freedom’.
- Condemn ongoing religious freedom violations and support religious organizations and human rights groups being targeted for their advocacy of religious freedom.
- The US administration **should promote inter-faith dialogue and the rights of all communities at bilateral and multilateral forums** “such as the ministerial of the Quadrilateral (the Quad).
- The US Congress should **raise issues in the US-India bilateral space**, such as by hosting hearings, writing letters and constituting Congressional delegations.

## #RELIANCE JIO & BYJU'S IN 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL FIRMS

- Two Indian firms, Reliance's Jio Platforms and e-learning startup Byju's have been featured in Time Magazine's 2021 list of 100 most influential companies.
- The Time magazine mentioned on its website that the companies shaping the future are at the heart of the first-ever TIME 100 Most Influential Companies.

### Key Highlights

- The magazine had solicited nominations from across sectors including **entertainment, healthcare, education, transportation, technology**. The companies were then evaluated based on key factors including:
  - Impact
  - Innovation
  - Relevance
  - Ambition
  - Leadership
- The result was a **diverse array of 100 institutions, from the tech startup engineering companies** that are coming with smart ways to recycle to cryptocurrency firm to the pharma titans creating the vaccines of tomorrow.
- Time Magazine listed Jio Platforms under the Innovators category alongside **Netflix, TikTok, Zoom, Adidas, Ikea and Moderna**. **BYJU'S** earned a place in the esteemed list for expanding e-learning across India, said the magazine.



### About Reliance Jio

- **Reliance Jio platform** has built India's largest 4G network by charging some of **the lowest data rates in the world, less than Rs 5 a month for 1 GB**.
- The platform has invited the highest number of **FDI's in the past year when across the world FDI** was low due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. **Jio has over 410 million subscribers**.
- **Jio Platforms** is also working with Facebook to develop a WhatsApp-based e-commerce platform and Google to rollout out low-cost 5G smartphones.

### About BYJU's

- **Byju's** was founded as an educational technology company by **Byju Raveendran and DivyaGokulnath** in 2011. It has now become one of the world's most valuable education technology company. It saw a sharp rise in popularity in 2020 as the demand for e-learning rose in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Time Magazine** said in a statement that Byju's founder went on a spending spree, fuelled by funding from investors like **Tencent and BlackRock** as users of his company's signature app nearly doubled to 80 million during the **Covid-19 pandemic**.
- The company has been credited for creating a foothold in markets outside India including in **the UK, the US, Indonesia, Mexico and Brazil**.
- Its explosive growth has turned it into one of India's most lucrative startups and has increased the

company's expected value to \$15 billion, up from \$5.5 billion in July 2019.

**Note:** The 'TIME100 Most Influential Companies' is a new list and an expansion of the TIME100 franchise. The list will be officially presented on April 30, 2021 at a virtual event that will feature some of the world's renowned CEOs and artists such as Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, General Motors CEO Mary Barra, Airbnb co-founder and CEO Brian Chesky, Actor-performer Usher and Founder of Hello Sunshine Reese Witherspoon.

### #NITI AAYOG REPORT ON DIGITALLY INCLUSIVE BHARAT

The NITI Aayog and Mastercard have released a report titled 'Connected Commerce: Creating a Roadmap for a Digitally Inclusive Bharat'.

- The report identifies challenges in accelerating **Digital Financial Inclusion (DFI)** in India and provides recommendations for making digital services accessible to its 1.3 billion citizens.

#### Digital Financial Inclusion

- "Digital financial inclusion (DFI)" can be defined broadly as **digital access to and use of formal financial services by excluded and underserved populations**. Such services should be suited to customers' needs, and delivered responsibly, **at a cost both affordable to customers and sustainable for providers**.



#### Challenges:

- **Demand Side Gap:** Lot of effort has been put to attain DFI and **much success on the supply side of DFI** has been seen (**e-governance, the JAM trinity, Goods and Services Tax, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) schemes**).
- However, the break in the digital financial flow comes at the last mile, where **account holders mostly withdraw cash for their end-use**.
- **Unsuccessful Agri-Techs:** Agriculture, with its allied sectors, provides livelihood to a large section of the Indian population. Over the years, agriculture's contribution to national GDP has declined from 34% in 1983-84 to just 16% in 2018-19.
- Most agri-techs **have not succeeded in digitizing financial transactions** for farmers or enabling formal credit at lower rates of interest by leveraging transaction data.
- **Inability of MSMEs to Access Formal Finance:**
- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** have been a key growth driver for the Indian economy. According to a 2020 Report, the category employed some 110 million people, or over 40% of India's non-farm workforce.
- The **lack of proper documentation, bankable collateral, credit history and non-standard financials** force them to access informal credit at interest rates that are double of those from formal lenders.

### Trust and Security in Digital Commerce:

- The surge in digital transactions has increased the **risk for possible security breaches**, both for consumers and businesses.
- A Medici report of June 2020 says **40,000 cyber-attacks targeted the IT infrastructure of the banking sector in India**.
- **Digitally Accessible Transit Systems:** With the onset of the pandemic, there is **an increasing need for transit systems to be further integrated with contactless payments** in India.
- Globally, the trend is toward **open-loop transit systems**, with interoperable payment solutions allowing travelers to switch between different modes of transport with a connected payments network.

### Recommendations:

- For market players, it is critical to **address the gap on the demand side** by creating user-friendly digital products and services that encourage the behavioral transition from cash to digital.
- A significantly successful example is that of **FASTag**.
- **Strengthening the payment infrastructure** to promote a level playing field for **Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)** and banks.
- **Digitizing registration and compliance processes** and diversifying credit sources to enable growth opportunities for **MSMEs**.
- **Building information sharing systems**, including a 'fraud repository', and ensuring that online digital commerce platforms carry warnings to alert consumers to the risk of frauds.
- **Enabling agricultural NBFCs to access low-cost capital** and deploy a '**phygital**' (**physical + digital**) **model** for achieving better long-term digital outcomes. **Digitizing land records** will also provide a major boost to the sector.
- **To make city transit seamlessly accessible** to all with minimal crowding and queues, leveraging existing smartphones and contactless cards, and aim for an inclusive, interoperable, and fully open system.

### Digital Financial Inclusion Initiatives Taken in India

- **Jan Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile (JAM) Trinity:** The combination of Aadhaar, Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), and a surge in **mobile communication** has reshaped the way citizens access government services.
- As per the estimates in March 2020, the total number of beneficiaries under Jan Dhan scheme have been more than 380 million.
- **Expansion of Financial Services in Rural and Semi-Urban Areas:**
- Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)** have taken initiatives to promote financial inclusion in rural areas. These include:
  - Opening of bank branches in remote areas,
  - Issuing Kisan Credit Cards (KCC),
  - Linkage of self-help groups (SHGs) with banks,
  - Increasing the number of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs),
  - Business correspondents model of Banking
- **Payment Infrastructure Development Fund (PIDF) scheme**, etc.

- **Promotion of Secure Digital Payments:** With the strengthening of the **Unified Payment Interface (UPI)** by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), digital payments have been made secure, compared to the past.
- The **Aadhar-enabled Payment System (AEPS)** enables an Aadhar Enabled Bank Account (AEBA) to be used at any place and at any time, using micro ATMs.
- The payment system has been made more accessible due to offline transaction-enabling platforms, like Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), which makes it possible to use mobile banking services without internet, even on a basic mobile handset.

### Enhancing Financial Literacy:

- The Reserve Bank of India has undertaken a project titled "**Project Financial Literacy**".
- The Objective of the project is to disseminate information regarding the central bank and general banking concepts to various target groups, including, school and college going children, women, rural and urban poor, defence personnel and senior citizens.
- **Pocket Money** is a flagship programme of **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** and National Institute of Securities Market (NISM) aimed at increasing financial literacy among school students.

## THE GLOBAL FOREST GOALS REPORT 2021

According to the **United Nations' Global Forest Goals Report 2021**, Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the challenges faced by countries in managing their forests.

- The Report has been prepared by the **Department of Economic and Social Affairs** of the **United Nations**. It provides an initial overview of progress of Goals and targets contained within the **United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030**.



### Findings of the Report:

- **Covid-19 leading to Systemic Vulnerabilities and Inequalities:** More than just a health crisis, Covid-19 is driving losses of lives and livelihoods, extreme poverty, inequality, and food insecurity, and it has put the 'Future We Want' further out of reach.
- **Impact of Covid-19 on Global Output:** It is estimated that world gross product fell by an estimated 4.3% in 2020. It is the sharpest contraction of global output since the Great Depression.
- **Covid-19 is Threatening the Lifeline that Forests Provide:** An estimated 1.6 billion people, or 25% of the global population, rely on forests for their subsistence needs, livelihoods, employment, and income.
- Of the extreme poor in rural areas, 40% live in forest and savannah areas, and approximately 20% of the global population, especially women, children, landless farmers, and other vulnerable segments of society look to forests to meet their food and income needs.



### Impact of Covid-19 on Forest Dependent Population:

- On the **economic front**, forest-dependent populations have **faced job loss, reduced income, diminished access to markets and information**, and for many women and youth, a **contraction in seasonal employment**.
- **Socially**, many of these populations are already **marginalized and vulnerable groups**, such as indigenous peoples, least able to access critical socio-economic safety nets.
- Many forest dependent populations, especially those in remote or hard to reach places, have faced **difficulties accessing healthcare** or find that government assistance programmes and basic services are disrupted.

### Increased Pressure on Forest:

- Pandemic driven health and socio-economic outcomes have increased pressure on forests.
- To ease their growing vulnerability, many indigenous peoples and local communities, as well as returning migrants and urban workers, **have retreated deeper into the woods to seek food, fuel, shelter, and protection from the risks of Covid-19**.

### Biodiversity Crisis:

- Among its many findings, the '**Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services**' of the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)** highlighted that **one million species were at risk of extinction** and that 100 million hectares of tropical forest were lost from 1980 to 2000.
- At the same time, **climate change is jeopardizing the resilience of forest ecosystems** and their ability to support ecosystem services worldwide.
- Though forests offer nature-based solutions to overcome these concurrent global challenges, they have also never been more at risk.

### Suggestions:

- The resilient recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic along with responses to the climate and biodiversity crises **must be rooted in the world's forests**.
- Forests and forest-dependent people are both a casualty and an important part of the solution.
- **Sustainably resourced and managed forests** can bolster employment, disaster risk reduction, food security and social safety nets, for starters.
- Forest **can also protect biodiversity and advance both climate mitigation and adaptation**.
- With regard to global health, safeguarding and restoring forests are among the environmental actions that **can reduce the risk of future zoonotic disease outbreaks**.
- The report called for a future course of action that included **greater sustainability and a greener and more inclusive economy** to tackle the threats of Covid-19, climate change and the biodiversity crisis faced by forests.

### Status of World Forest

- **Total Forest Area:** According to the **Global Forest Resources Assessment 2020 (FRA 2020)** report, the **world's total forest area is 4.06 billion hectares (bha)**, which is 31% of the total land area. This area is equivalent to 0.52 hectares per person.

- **Top Countries in Forest Cover**—the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America and China constituted more than 54% of the world's forests.

### Forest in India

- According to the **India State of Forest Report, 2019**, the **Total Forest and Tree cover is 24.56%** of the geographical area of the country.
- **Forest Cover (Area-wise):** Madhya Pradesh> Arunachal Pradesh> Chhattisgarh> Odisha> Maharashtra.
- **National Forest Policy of India, 1988** envisages a goal of achieving 33% of the geographical area of the country under forest and tree cover.
- **United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030**
- The United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030 was created with a mission to promote sustainable forest management and enhance the contribution of forests and trees to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.
- The agreement on the first-ever UN Strategic Plan for Forests was **forged at a special session of the UN Forum on Forests held in January 2017** and provides an ambitious vision for global forests in 2030.
- **Goals and Targets:** It features a **set of six Global Forest Goals and 26 associated targets** to be reached by 2030, which are **voluntary and universal**.
- It includes a target to increase forest area by **3% worldwide by 2030**, signifying an increase of 120 million hectares, an area over twice the size of France.
- It builds on the vision of the 2030 Agenda and recognizes that real change requires decisive, collective action, within and beyond the UN System.

### #PROTECTED PLANET REPORT 2020

The report, titled **Protected Planet Report 2020**, underlined the progress the world has made toward the **ambitious goals agreed by countries in 2010** at the **United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity**.

#### Convention on Biological Diversity

- It is a **legally binding treaty** to conserve biodiversity that has been in force since 1993.
- Nearly all countries including India have ratified it (notably, the **US has signed but not ratified**).
- The **CBD Secretariat is based in Montreal, Canada** and it **operates under the United Nations Environment Programme**.
- A supplementary agreement to the Convention known as the **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety** (adopted at COP5, 2000) seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology.
- The **Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS)** was adopted in Nagoya, Japan at COP10.
- The COP-10 also adopted a **ten-year framework for action** by all countries to save biodiversity.



- Officially known as “**Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020**”, it provided a set of 20 targets, collectively known as the **Aichi Targets for biodiversity**.

### About the Protected Planet Reports:

- **The reports are released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with support from the National Geographic Society, a global non-profit.**
- **These are biennial landmark publications that assess the state of protected and conserved areas around the world.**
- **The report is the first in the series to include data on Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) in addition to protected areas.**
- **OECM are a conservation designation for areas that are achieving the effective in-situ conservation of biodiversity outside of protected areas.**
- **The 2020 edition provides the final report on the status of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11, and looks to the future as the world prepares to adopt a new post-2020 global biodiversity framework.**
- **Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 aimed to conserve 17% of land and inland water ecosystems and 10% of its coastal waters and oceans by 2020.**

### Findings of the Report:

- **Increase in Protected Area:** As many as 82% of countries and territories have increased their share of protected area and coverage of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) since 2010.
- Protected areas covering almost 21 million km<sup>2</sup> have been added to the global network.

### Increase in OECMs:

- Since OECMs were first recorded in 2019, these areas have added a further 1.6 million km<sup>2</sup> to the global network.
- Despite being limited to only five countries and territories, the available data on OECMs show that **they make a significant contribution to coverage and connectivity.**
- Of the area now covered by protected areas and OECMs, 42% was added in the past decade.
- **Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs):** KBAs are sites that contribute significantly to the global persistence of biodiversity, in terrestrial, freshwater and marine ecosystems. On an average, **62.6% of KBA either fully or partially overlap** with protected areas and OECMs.
- The average percentage of each KBA within protected areas and OECMs is 43.2% for terrestrial; 42.2% for inland water and 44.2% for marine (within national waters).
- There was **an increase of 5 percentage points** or less in each case since 2010, the greatest growth in marine and coastal areas.

### Challenges associated

- **Management effectiveness assessments** have been conducted across only 18.29% of the area covered by protected areas, and it is likely that many do not meet the standards for full effectiveness.
- **Integrating protected areas and OECMs** across landscapes and seascapes, and in development sectors, remains a crucial challenge for ensuring the persistence of biodiversity.

Study Material by [www.successmantra.in](http://www.successmantra.in) & [www.easevidya.com](http://www.easevidya.com)

- Measurable targets for integrated land-use and marine spatial planning are needed to facilitate progress.
- **Governance** is a key contributor to effective conservation. Both protected areas and OECMs can have a variety of governance regimes: government, private, governance by indigenous peoples and local communities, or any combination of these.
- **Data are still poor on governance** diversity and quality for protected areas and OECMs.
- New guidance and better reporting can provide new opportunities to better recognise and support the conservation efforts of diverse groups, including indigenous peoples, local communities, and private actors.

### #INDIA LARGEST RECIPIENT OF REMITTANCE IN 2020

According to the latest edition of the **World Bank's Migration and Development Brief**, despite Covid-19, remittance flows remained resilient in 2020, registering a smaller decline than previously projected.



#### Remittance Inflow of India:

- **India** being at **top**, received over **USD 83 billion** in remittances in 2020, a drop of just **0.2 per cent** from the **previous year**, despite a pandemic that devastated the world economy.
- India's remittances **fell by just 0.2% in 2020**, with much of the decline due to a **17% drop in remittances from the United Arab Emirates**, which offset resilient flows from the United States and other host countries.
- In **2019**, India had received **USD 83.3 billion** in remittances.

#### Global Remittances

- **China** is **second** in terms of global remittances in 2020. China received **USD 59.5 billion** in remittances in 2020.
- **India and China** are followed by **Mexico, the Philippines, Egypt, Pakistan, France and Bangladesh.**
- **Remittance outflow:** Remittance outflow was the maximum from the **United States (USD 68 billion)**, followed by **UAE, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, Germany, and China.**

#### Reason for the Steady Flow of Remittances:

- **Fiscal stimulus** that resulted in **better-than-expected economic conditions** in host countries. Shift in flows from **cash to digital** and from informal to formal channels.
- **Cyclical movements in oil prices and currency exchange rates.**
- Remittance: **A remittance is money** sent to another party, usually one in another country.
- The sender is typically an **immigrant** and the **recipient a relative back home.**
- Remittances represent one of the **largest sources of income** for people in **low-income and developing nations. It often exceeds** the amount of **direct investment and official development assistance.**
- Remittances help families **afford food, healthcare, and basic needs.**
- **India is the world's biggest recipient of remittances.** A remittance bolsters India's **foreign exchange reserves** and helps fund its **current account deficit.**



### World Bank

- **About:** The Bretton Woods Conference held in 1944, created the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- **The IBRD later** became the **World Bank**.
- The **World Bank Group** is a unique global partnership of **five institutions working for sustainable solutions** that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
- **Members:** It has **189-member countries**. India is also a **member country**.

### Its Five development institutions:

- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD): **provides loans, credits, and grants.**
- International Development Association (IDA): **provides low- or no-interest loans to low-income countries.**
- International Finance Corporation (IFC): **provides investment, advice, and asset management to companies and governments.**
- Multilateral Guarantee Agency (MIGA): **insures lenders and investors against political risk such as war.**
- International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID): **settles investment-disputes between investors and countries.**

### #INDIA RANKED 120<sup>TH</sup> IN 6<sup>TH</sup> SDR 2021

- The **6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Sustainable Development Report (2021)** ranked India at **120<sup>th</sup>** out of 165 countries with a country score of 60.1. Finland topped the rankings with a score of 85.90 followed by Sweden with 85.61 and Denmark with 84.86, Germany at 82.48, and Belgium with 82.19.
- The **Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** released its annual Sustainable Development Report 2021, which ranked all the UN member states based on their performance against the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report also comprises data on the International Spillover Index.
- **India's spillover score stands at 98.90 out of 100** and spillover rank at 32 out of 165 countries. Every country's action plan can cause positive or negative effects on other countries' ability to achieve the SDGs.
- A country with a higher spillover score indicates that a country causes more positive spillovers and less negative spillovers.



### Sustainable Development Report 2021

- The Sustainable Development Report 2021 showcases the SDG Index and Dashboards for all UN member countries. The SDG Index and Dashboards provide the rankings of all UN member countries based on their performance **against all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

- Since 2015, it is for the first time, all countries showed a reversal in progress in achieving the SDGs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, low-income developing countries (LIDCs) lack the financial strength to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and the pandemic has worsened the challenge.
- East and South Asia have shown progress on the SDGs more than any other region on a regional level. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Ivory Coast are three individual countries that have progressed most on the SDG Index score since 2015.
- **Central African Republic, Chad, and South Sudan** have ranked the least on SDG.

### Sustainable Development Report 2021: International Spillover Index

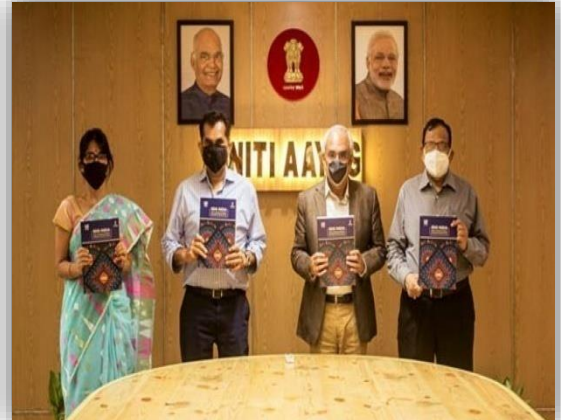
- The **authors of the Sustainable Development Report 2021** have also compiled an International Spillover Index for each member country.
- The International Spillover Index measures spillovers (positive or negative) based on each country's actions. The Spillover Index is subdivided into four categories that impact the SDGs of countries due to negative spillovers.
  - **Environmental and social spillovers** embodied in trade
  - Direct cross-border flows
  - **International economic and financial flows**
  - Peacekeeping and security spillovers
- **Since 2012, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)** operates under the aegis of the UN Secretary-General. The SDSN prepares technological and global scientific expertise to enable finding solutions for sustainable development, including **the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

### 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. 193 member countries, including India, got committed to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals that require efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change while ensuring that no one was left behind.
- India played a significant role in making the declaration and its progress in **achieving these goals are crucial for the world as it is home to about 17% of the world population**.
- The SDG India index, **released by the NITI Aayog and the United Nations**, shows that the nation has a score of 58, a little beyond halfway mark in meeting the target set for 2030.

### #NITI AAYOG RELEASED 3<sup>RD</sup> SDG INDIA INDEX

- The NITI Aayog on June 3, 2021, released the third edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index and Dashboard 2020-21.
- Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog launched in the report titled SDG India Index and Dashboard 2020-21: Partnerships in the Decade of Action. Amitabh Kant, CEO, NITI Aayog, Dr. Vinod Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, and Sanyukta Samaddar, Advisor (SGDs), NITI Aayog were present at the launch.



- The SDG India Index 2020-21 had been designed and developed by NITI Aayog with extensive consultations with the States and Union Territories, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), UN agencies led by United Nations in India, and the key Union Ministries.
- Dr Rajiv Kumar during the launch said, "Our effort of monitoring SDGs through the SDG India Index and Dashboard continues to be widely noticed and applauded around the world." SDG India Index continues to be a rare data-driven initiative to rank our States and Union Territories by computing a composite index on the SDGs.
- The theme of SDG India Index 2020-21 focuses on the significance of partnerships. "It is clear that by working together we can build a more resilient and sustainable future, where no one is left behind."

### SDG India Index 2020-21: Kerala ranks top, Bihar worst

- The SDG India Index 2020-21 measures the progress of states and UTs on basis of economic, social, and environmental parameters.
- Kerala ranked as the top-performing state with a score of 75 while Bihar was the worst performing state with a score of 52 in the NITI Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21.
- The top-performing states in the NITI Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21 are Kerala at the first rank followed by Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu at second, Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Uttarakhand at third, Sikkim at fourth, and Maharashtra at fifth rank.
- The worst performing states in the NITI Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21 are Chhattisgarh, Nagaland, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand, and Bihar at the bottom.

### SDG India Index 2020-21: Third Edition

- The SDG India Index 2020-21 report tracked the progress of all Indian states and UTs on 115 indicators in alignment with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)'s National Indicator Framework (NIF). The first edition of the SDG India Index was launched in December 2018.
- SDG India Index 2020-21 evaluated the States and Union Territories on 16 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on a scale of 0 to 100. The SDG 2020-21 report mentioned that India's overall SDG score has improved by 6 points, from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.

- 12 more states and UTs - Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Haryana, Punjab, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Maharashtra, Tripura, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, and Ladakh found themselves in the Front-runners category in the third edition of SDG India Index 2020-21. There were ten states and UTs in the front-runners' category in the 2019 edition.

### National Institute for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)

**Planning has been in Indian psyche** as our leaders came under influence of the socialist clime of erstwhile USSR. Planning commission served as the planning vehicle for close to six decades with a focus on control and command approach.

- Planning Commission was replaced by a new institution – NITI AAYOG on January 1, 2015 with emphasis on 'Bottom -Up' approach to envisage the vision of Maximum Governance, Minimum Government, echoing the spirit of 'Cooperative Federalism'.

### Administration of NITI Aayog

- **Chairperson:** Prime Minister
- **Vice-Chairperson:** To be appointed by Prime-Minister
- **Governing Council:** Chief Ministers of all states and Lt. Governors of Union Territories.
- **Regional Council:** To address specific regional issues, Comprising Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors Chaired by Prime Minister or his nominee.
- **Adhoc Membership:** 2 member in ex-officio capacity from leading Research institutions on rotational basis.
- **Ex-Officio membership:** Maximum four from Union council of ministers to be nominated by Prime minister.
- **Chief Executive Officer:** Appointed by Prime-minister for a fixed tenure, in rank of Secretary to Government of India.
- **Special Invitees:** Experts, Specialists with domain knowledge nominated by Prime-minister.

### Objectives

- To **foster cooperative federalism** through structured support initiatives and mechanisms with the States on a continuous basis, recognizing that strong States make a strong nation.
- To **develop mechanisms to formulate credible plans** at the village level and aggregate these progressively at higher levels of government.
- To ensure, on areas that are specifically referred to it, that the **interests of national security are incorporated in economic strategy and policy.**
- To pay special attention to the sections of our society that may be at risk of not benefitting adequately from economic progress.
- To provide advice and encourage partnerships **between key stakeholders and national and international like-minded Think Tanks**, as well as educational and policy research institutions.
- To maintain a state-of-the-art Resource Centre, be a repository of research on good governance and best practices in **sustainable and equitable development as well as help their dissemination to stakeholders.**



## Challenges related to it:

- To prove its mettle in **policy formulation**, the **NITI Aayog** needs to prioritize from the long list of 13 objectives with clear understanding of the difference in policy, planning and strategy.
- To **build the trust, faith and confidence more than the planning commission**, **NITI Aayog** needs freedom of various kinds with budgetary provisions not in terms of plan and non-plan expenditures but revenue and capital expenditure as the higher rate of increase in capital expenditure can remove infrastructural deficits at all levels of operation in the economy.

| NITI AAYOG   | PLANNING COMMISSION  |
|--|--|
| It serves as an advisory Think Tank.   | It served as extra-constitutional body.  |
| It draws membership from a wider expertise.                                      | It had limited expertise.  |
| It serves in spirit of Cooperative Federalism as states are equal partners.      | States participated as spectators in annual plan meetings.                         |
| Secretaries to be known as CEO appointed by Prime- Minister.                     | Secretaries were appointed through usual process.                                  |
| It focuses upon 'Bottom-Up' approach of Planning.                                | It followed a 'Top-Down' approach.   |
| It does not possess mandate to impose policies.                                  | Imposed policies on states and tied allocation of funds with projects it approved. |
| It does not have powers to allocate funds, which are vested in Finance Minister. | It had powers to allocate funds to ministries and state governments.               |

## #PERFORMANCE GRADING INDEX (PGI) 2019-20

The Union Education Minister has approved the release of **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2019-20** for States and Union Territories.

- The PGI is a **tool to provide insights on the status of school education in States and UTs** including key levers that drive their performance and critical areas for improvement.



### About the Performance Grading Index (PGI):

- Background:** The PGI for States and Union Territories was **first published in 2019** with reference year 2017-18.
- The **PGI: States/UTs for 2019-20** is the **third publication** in this series.

### Objectives:

- The PGI exercise envisages that the index would propel States and UTs towards **undertaking multi-pronged interventions** that will bring about the much-desired optimal education outcomes.
- The PGI helps the States/UTs to **pinpoint the gaps** and accordingly prioritise areas for intervention to ensure that the school education system is robust at every level.
- Implementing Agency:** It is initiated by the **Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL)**.
- Source of Information:** The information on the indicators are drawn from data available with the DoSEL from the **Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE)**, **National Achievement Survey (NAS)** of NCERT, **Mid Day Meal website**, **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** and the information uploaded by the States and UTs on the **Shagun portal** of DoSEL.
- Methodology:** The PGI is structured in **two categories**, namely, **Outcomes and Governance & Management** and comprises **70 indicators** in aggregate with a total weightage of 1000.
- Domains** under categories include: **Access, Infrastructure & Facilities, Equity, Governance process.**

### Important Findings of the PGI 2019-20:

- State-wise Performance: **Shows that 33 States and UTs have improved their PGI scores in 2019-20 compared to the previous year.**
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Puducherry, Punjab and Tamil Nadu have improved **their overall PGI scores by 10%.**
- Inter-state Differential: **On a maximum possible of 1000 points, the range between the States and UTs with the highest and the lowest score is more than 380 points in the year 2019-20.**

### Domain-wise Performance:

- Access:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Punjab have shown improvement of 10% or more in the 'Access' domain.

- **Infrastructure and Facilities:** Thirteen states and UTs have shown improvement by 10% or more in 'Infrastructure and Facilities' while **Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Odisha** have improved their scores in the domain by 20% or more.
- **Equity:** In 'Equity', **Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Odisha** have shown an improvement of more than 10%.
- **Governance Process:** 19 states have shown improvement by 10% or more.
- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan and West Bengal** have shown improvement by at least 20%.

### Conclusion

- A reliable, timely and participative information system coupled with a robust and efficient data analytics framework is the key to successful implementation of any Government programme.
- In the arena of School Education & Literacy, guided by the enabling legislative framework of the **Right to Education**, the **National Education Policy 2020** and visionary **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, Government Schemes like **Samagra Shiksha (SS)**, Mid-Day Meal (MDM) and similar such schemes by the States would deliver the desired result if they are monitored effectively.
- The framework of a real time data availability system (namely, UDISE+, Shagun, etc.) and an objective and holistic performance evaluation framework provided through the PGI would provide the right combination for effective implementation of policy in the School Education sector.
- A performance-based grant would provide the required incentive to the States and UTs to ensure their continuous and focused attention to this sector, which is crucial for overall growth and development of the country.

### #ALL INDIA SURVEY ON HIGHER EDUCATION (AISHE)

Recently, the Union Education Minister announced the release of the report of **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2019-20**.

- This Report **provides key performance indicators** on the current status of **Higher education in the country**. It is the **10<sup>th</sup>** in the series of AISHE **annually released** by the Department of Higher Education.



### Total Student Enrolment:

- In the **last five years from 2015-16 to 2019-20**, there has been a **growth of 11.4%** in student enrolment.
- Total Enrolment in Higher Education stands at **3.85 crore in 2019-20** as compared to **3.74 crore in 2018-19**, registering a **growth of 11.36 lakh (3.04 %)**.
- **Uttar Pradesh has highest student enrolment** in India, it has **49.1% male and 50.9% female** students followed by **Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra**.

### Gross Enrolment Ratio:

- The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) **increased by a minuscule 0.8%** in 2019-20.
- GER is the **number of students enrolled in a given level of education**, regardless of age, **expressed as a percentage** of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.
- The percentage of students belonging to the eligible age group enrolled in higher education in **2019-20 is 27.1%** against **26.3% in 2018-19** and **24.3% in 2014-2015**.
- **Female Enrolment:** There has been an overall **increase of over 18%** in female enrolment in higher education from **2015-16 to 2019-20**.
- However, the **share of girl students is lowest in institutes of national importance** while female participation in professional courses is lower in comparison to academic courses.

### Gender Parity Index:

- **Gender Parity Index (GPI)** in Higher Education in 2019-20 is **1.01** against **1.00 in 2018-19** indicating an **improvement in the relative access to higher education for females** of eligible age group compared to males.
- A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the sexes; a GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favour of males; whereas a **GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females**.
- **Teacher's:** Total Number of Teachers stands at 15,03,156 comprising **57.5% male and 42.5% female**. **Pupil Teacher Ratio** in Higher Education in 2019-20 is **26**.
- **Attractive Disciplines:** Nearly 85% of the students (2.85 crore) were enrolled in the six major disciplines such as **Humanities, Science, Commerce, Engineering & Technology, Medical Science and IT & Computer**.

### Recent Initiatives:

- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:** Union Cabinet has approved the **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020** with an aim to introduce several changes in the Indian education system - **from the school to college level**.
- The NEP 2020 aims at making **"India a global knowledge superpower"**.
- The Cabinet has also approved the **renaming** of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to the **Ministry of Education**.
- The NEP cleared by the Cabinet is **only the third major revamp of the framework of education in India since independence**. The **two earlier education policies** were brought in **1968 and 1986**.
- It aims at increasing the GER in higher education to **50% by 2035**.
- **Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC):** It aims at improving the **research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions** by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian institutions and the best institutions in the world.
- **Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA):** It aims at providing **strategic funding to higher educational institutions** throughout the country.
- **Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF):** It will attract the talent pool of the country to **doctoral (Ph.D) programmes for carrying out research** in cutting edge science and technology domains, with focus on national priorities.



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