25 – 11 – 2021

News: SDG Urban Index

➢ Recently, NITI Aayog under the Indo-German Cooperation released the inaugural Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Urban Index and Dashboard 2021–22.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Urban Index

➢ The index and dashboard are a result of the NITI Aayog Germany's International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and BMZ collaboration focused on driving SDG localization in our cities, under the umbrella of Indo-German Development Cooperation.

➢ It ranks 56 urban areas on 77 SDG indicators across 46 targets of the SDG framework.

➢ It will further strengthen SDG localization and institute robust SDG monitoring at the city level.

➢ The urban areas are ranked on a scale of 0-100.

➢ A score of 100 implies that the urban area has achieved the targets set for 2030; a score of 0 implies that it is the farthest from achieving the targets among the selected urban areas.

➤ Overall or composite urban area scores are then generated from the Goal-wise scores to measure aggregate performance of the urban area.

➤ Urban areas have been classified based on their composite score: Aspirant 0–49, Performer 50–64, Front-Runner 65–99 and Achiever 100.

➤ Top Performers are Shimla, Coimbatore, Chandigarh, Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi, while worst Performers are Dhanbad, Meerut, Itanagar, Guwahati and Patna.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index

➤ First launched in December 2018, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index has become the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in India.

➤ It has also fostered competition among the states and UTs by ranking them on the global goals.

➤ The index is developed by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the United Nations in India.

➤ It tracks the progress of all states and UTs on 115 indicators aligned with the National Indicator Framework (NIF) of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

- The SDG India Index scores range between 0–100, higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved.

- States and UTs are classified in four categories based on Index score: Aspirant: 0–49, Performer: 50–64, Front-runner: 65–99 and Achiever: 100.

- Currently, there are no states in the aspirant and achiever category.

Latest Findings

- Country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points — from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.

- This improvement is on accounts of improvement in performance in providing facilities including clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy among others.

- Kerala retained its rank as the top with a score of 75, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu both took the second spot with a score of 74.

- Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states in this year's India index.

- Chandigarh maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68).

Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

➢ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future.

➢ At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership

➢ 17 Goals are: No poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health & Well Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Clean Water & Sanitation, Affordable & Clean Energy, Decent work & Economic Growth, Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure, Reduced Inequalities, Sustainable Cities & Communities, Responsible Consumption & Production, Climate Action, Life Below water, Life on Land, Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions and Partnership for the Goals.

News: Bharat Gaurav Scheme

➤ Recently, the Indian Railways has announced the new scheme 'Bharat Gaurav' to tap the huge potential of tourism.

Bharat Gaurav Scheme

➤ Under the scheme, now trains have a third segment for tourism. Till now, the Railways had passenger segments and goods segments.

➤ These trains are not regular trains that will run as per a timetable but will be more on the lines of the Ramayana Express being run by the IRCTC.

➤ It was announced under the theme-based tourist circuit trains. These trains will be run by both private players and IRCTC, in theme-based circuits.

➤ By theme-based tourism (circuits), the railways means trains like Guru Kripa that goes to all places related to Guru Nanak or a Ramayan-themed train to touch upon places related to Lord Ram.

➤ Anyone, from societies, trusts, consortia and even state governments can apply to take these trains and run them on special tourism circuits based on a theme.

➤ Service Provider will offer all inclusive packages to tourists including rail travel, hotel accommodation, sightseeing arrangement, visit to historical/heritage sites, tour guides etc.

Benefits of such Scheme

➢ These trains will help realise India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places to the people of India and the world. They will also help in tapping the vast tourism potential of India.

News: Chinese firms eye Afghanistan's lithium

➢ A number of Chinese companies have already begun "onsite inspections" of possible projects to tap lithium deposits in Afghanistan, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime, according to a report in the Chinese state media.

➢ Lithium is one of many resources in Afghanistan present in large deposits but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure.

Lithium

➢ Lithium is a chemical element with the symbol Li.

➢ It is a soft, silvery-white metal.

➢ Under standard conditions, it is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element.

➢ It is highly reactive and flammable, and must be stored in mineral oil.

➢ It is an alkali metal and a rare metal.

- Australia tops the production of Lithium with 42000 tonnes followed by Chila, China and Argentina.

- Lithium Triangle (Argentina, Bolivia and Chile) countries has 54% of the Lithium reserves in the world.

- Chile individually holds the largest reserves of Lithium followed by Australia and Argentina.

Uses of Lithium

- Lithium metal is used to make useful alloys.

- For example, with lead to make 'white metal' bearings for motor engines, with aluminium to make aircraft parts, and with magnesium to make armour plates.

- In Thermonuclear reactions.

- To make electrochemical cells. Lithium is an important component in Electric Vehicles, Laptops etc.
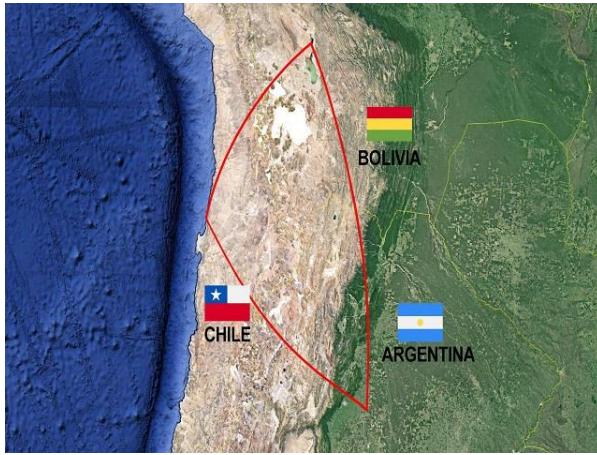
Lithium in India

- India currently imports all its lithium needs.

- Recent surveys by the Atomic Minerals Directorate for Exploration and Research (AMD) have shown the presence of lithium resources in Mandya district, Karnataka.
- The survey shows presence of 1,600 tonnes of lithium resources in the igneous rocks of the Marlagalla Allapatna region of Karnataka's Mandya district.

Lithium Triangle

- Lithium Triangle is an intersection of Chile, Bolivia and Argentina, known for high quality salt flats.
- Salar de Uyuni in Bolivia, Salar de Atacama in Chile and Salar de Arizaro in Argentina contains over 45% of known global lithium reserves.
- Beneath Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat lies the world's greatest lithium deposits.
- Bolivia, one of South America's poorest countries, envisions development by harvesting lithium on an industrial scale from underground saltwater brines.
- It can be mined from rock or processed from brine.
- Lithium dissolved in underground saline aquifers called "brine", pumped to surface by wells and then allowed to evaporate in vast knee-deep ponds.

News: NITI Aayog for full stack digital banks

➢ Recently, NITI Aayog proposed setting up of full stack 'digital banks', which would principally rely on the Internet and other proximate channels to offer their services and not physical branches, to mitigate the financial deepening challenges being faced in the country.

Digital Banks

➢ These entities will issue deposits, make loans and offer the full suite of services that the Banking Regulation Act empowers them to.

➢ As the name suggests, however, DBs will principally rely on the Internet and other proximate channels to offer their services.

NITI Aayog

➤ The NITI Aayog (Hindi for Policy Commission) (abbreviation for National Institution for Transforming India) is a policy think tank of the Government of India, established with the aim to achieve sustainable development goals with cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.

➤ Its initiatives include "15-year road map", "7-year vision, strategy, and action plan", AMRUT, Digital India, Atal Innovation Mission, Medical Education Reform, agriculture reforms (Model Land Leasing Law, Reforms of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act, Agricultural Marketing and Farmer Friendly Reforms Index for ranking states), Indices Measuring States' Performance in Health, Education and Water Management, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on Rationalization of Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Sub-Group of Chief Ministers on Skill Development, Task Forces on Agriculture and up of Poverty, and Transforming India Lecture Series.

Members

➤ The Prime Minister as the Chairperson.

- A Governing Council composed of Chief Ministers of all the States and Union territories with Legislatures and lieutenant governors of Union Territories (except Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir and Pondicherry).

- Special Invitees which include experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge as special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister.

- Regional Councils composed of Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in the region to address specific issues and contingencies impacting more than one state or a region. These are formed for a specified tenure. These are convened by the Prime Minister and comprises of the Chief Ministers of States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories in the region. These are chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee.

- Full-time organizational framework composed of a Vice-Chairperson (appointed by Prime Minister), two part-time members (from leading universities, research organizations and other relevant institutions in an ex-officio capacity), four ex-officio members of the Union Council of Ministers to be nominated by the PM, a Chief Executive Officer with the rank of Secretary to the Government of India (appointed by PM) who looks after administration, and a secretariat.