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Index for Sustainable Development Goals

- The India Index for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2023-24, by NITI Aayog, was recently released.

Sustainable Development Goals

- The United Nations has set 17 goals to be achieved by 2030 to eradicate hunger and poverty, and improve basic amenities like drinking water and education.
- In September 2015, India, along with 200 other countries, committed to achieving these goals within the stipulated time.

India Index

- The NITI Aayog, in collaboration with the UN SDG India division, developed this index in 2018 to monitor and assess the performance of states and union territories in their journey toward achieving the SDG goals.
- The index tracks and assesses the progress made through government schemes, actions, and other interventions related to the SDG goals.
- This index is designed to evaluate the overall performance of state and union territory governments in various sectors related to the SDG goals.
- The objective is not only to ensure the achievement of the SDG goals but also to foster positive competition and mutual cooperation between states and union territories.

Number of Goals

- The index has been released four times so far. The first index in 2018-19 assessed 13 goals.
- The second index in 2019-20 assessed 16 goals.
- The third index in 2020-21 included 17 goals. After a gap of three years, the fourth index now assesses 16 goals.

Assessment Method

- Each state is assigned scores between 0-100 based on overall performance related to the SDG goals.
- The higher the score, the closer the state or union territory is to achieving the specified SDG goals by 2030.
- States and union territories scoring 0-49 are classified as 'Aspirant.'

- Those scoring 50-64 are categorized as 'Performer,' and those scoring 65-99 as 'Front Runner.'
- A score of 100 denotes 'Achiever.'

Rising Scores

- India's overall score increased steadily from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019-20, 66 in 2020-21, and 71 in 2023-24.
- Progress in schemes introduced by the central government, such as poverty eradication (SDG Goal 1), inclusive growth (SDG Goal 8), and climate action (SDG Goal 13), contributed to the rise in India's overall score.
- Among the states, Kerala and Uttarakhand topped with 79 points each. With two states sharing the top spot, Tamil Nadu stands third with 78 points.
- The total number of states and union territories in the 'Front Runner' category with scores between 65-99 has increased to 32 this year.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha are among the 10 states and union territories newly included in this category.
- The overall scores of all states and union territories have increased by 1 to 8 points.
- The scores of Assam, Manipur, Punjab, West Bengal, and Jammu and Kashmir have increased by eight points.

Sting Operation for Public Welfare is Legal

- The Kerala High Court has ruled that newspapers and media cannot be sued for sting operations conducted in the public interest.

Verdict

- Newspapers have a duty to inform the public about how the government functions.
- At times, to reveal the truth to the public, newspapers and media may need to blur the boundaries of the law.
- Newspapers, as the fourth pillar of democracy, are crucial for a healthy democracy.
- They investigate and expose wrongdoing, including corruption and abuse of power, by those in authority.
- To bring out the truth, newspapers undertake certain actions, one of which is sting operations, generally not permitted by law.
- However, whether such sting operations conducted by newspapers are legal should be decided based on the case.
- If a sting operation is carried out with any malicious intent or to defame an individual, it will never receive legal backing.
- Sting operations by newspapers that uncover the truth in a case and reveal it to the public without any wrongful intent cannot be prosecuted.