

19th - 25th April Weekly Compilation

(The Hindu+ Indian Express + PIB + Other World Wide News)

❖ Inclusive Internet Index 2021

(The Hindu)

Why in News: Inclusive Internet Index 2021 has been released.

Inclusive Internet Index, 2021

- Facebook Commissions the Inclusive Internet Index, 2021, and The Economist Intelligence Unit develops the index.
- It seeks to measure the extent of accessibility and affordability of the Internet. Also, the internet should be able to enable positive social and economic outcomes at the individual and group levels.
- The index assesses the performance of 120 countries representing 98% of global GDP and 96% of the global population.

The Index score is based on the scores of 4 categories;

- **Availability:** It examines the quality and breadth of available infrastructure required for access and levels of Internet usage.
- **Affordability:** It examines the cost of access relative to income and the level of competition in the Internet marketplace.
- **Relevance:** It also examines the existence and extent of local language content and relevant content.
- **Readiness:** Furthermore, it examines the capacity to access the Internet. It includes skills (literacy), cultural acceptance, and supporting policy. Literacy measures the level of education and preparedness to use the Internet

Key Findings Related to India:

India's Rank: 49th out of 120 countries in the Index. India is set to reach one billion internet users by 2025. There were over 687.6 million internet users in India in 2020.

Other Findings:

- Topped by: Sweden ranks 1st in the index, followed by the US and Spain.

- The majority of countries (77 out of 120) saw improvements in internet inclusion overall, in part because of increased availability.
- People in low and lower-middle-income countries relied more on online education during the pandemic in comparison to wealthier countries.

❖ Gender Samwad

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: The Ministry of Rural Development has organized the Gender Samvaad Event.

Gender Samvaad Event

- Gender Samvaad is cooperation between Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) and Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE).
- **Aim:** It aims to generate greater awareness about gender-related interventions under DAY-NRLM across the country. It focuses on hearing opinions from the states and the field.
- **Activities under Gender Samvaad:** Gender Samvaad provides states with opportunities to:
 - Understand best practices/initiatives that other states are undertaking to improve women's organisations.
 - Understand gender interventions globally;
 - Engage with experts and other colleagues on suggestions regarding how to handle issues/implementation barriers;
 - The creation of a 'gender repository'. It will have resource materials on best practices for gender interventions across the country/other countries;
 - Build advocacy on the need to focus on gender issues across State and National Rural Livelihoods Missions.

In 2016, DAY-NRLM launched a gender operational strategy to mainstream gender issues. Its focus was on training and capacity building of staff, cadres, and institutions on gender issues. This was coupled with the establishment of institutional platforms (e.g. social action committees and gender resource centers) at the field level. So that women could approach them for their grievances and claim their rights and entitlements.

IWWAGE

Initiative for What Works to Advance Women and Girls in the Economy (IWWAGE) is an initiative of LEAD. LEAD is an action-oriented research center of IFMR Society (a not-for-profit society registered under the Societies Act).

It aims to build on existing research and generate new evidence to inform and facilitate the agenda of women's economic empowerment.

❖ **National Startup Advisory Council**

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: The Minister of Commerce & Industry chaired the first meeting of the National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC).

National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC)

- National Startup Advisory Council (NSAC) was constituted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).
- Its aim is to advise the Government on measures required to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country.

Functions of NSAC:

- To foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students, in particular. Further, it also promotes innovation in all sectors of the economy across the country.
- To facilitate public organisations to assimilate innovation. This includes innovations in improving public service delivery; promote the creation, protection, and commercialization of intellectual property rights.
- To make it easier to start, operate, grow and exit businesses. It aims to achieve this by reducing regulatory compliances and costs, promote ease of access to capital for startups.

Composition of the National Startup Advisory Council:

- Chairman: Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- Convener of the Council: Joint Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade.
- Ex-officio Members: Nominees of the concerned Ministries/ Departments/ Organisations not below the rank of Joint Secretary.
- Non-official members: They are nominated by the Government from various categories like:
 - ✚ Founders of successful startups
 - ✚ Veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India
 - ✚ Persons capable of representing the interests of investors into startups, etc.

Note: The term of the non-official members will be for a period of two years or until further orders whichever is earlier.

❖ Global Diabetes Compact Initiative

(Source: Express)

Why in News: The World Health Organization (WHO) launches a Global Diabetes Compact Initiative.

Global Diabetes Compact Initiative

- Global Diabetes Compact aims to reduce the risk of diabetes. It will ensure that all people diagnosed with diabetes have access to equitable, comprehensive, affordable, quality treatment and care.
- This initiative launched at the Global Diabetes Summit. WHO and the government of Canada Co-hosted the summit with the support of the University of Toronto.
- Global Targets: The initiative will set standards for tackling the disease in the form of 'global coverage targets'. It will ensure a wider reach of diabetes care. A "global price tag" will also quantify the costs and benefits of meeting these new targets.

Need of Global Diabetes Compact

- Diabetes is one of the major co morbid conditions. It is linked to severe COVID-19 infections.
- The number of people with diabetes quadrupled in the last 40 years. It is also the only major non-communicable disease for which the risk of dying early is going up rather than down.
- About half of all adults with type 2 diabetes remain undiagnosed. And 50% of people with type 2 diabetes don't get the insulin they need.

Diabetes

Diabetes is a Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) that occurs either when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin (a hormone that regulates blood sugar or glucose) or when the body cannot effectively use the insulin it produces.

Types of Diabetes

- **Type I diabetes:** It is also known as juvenile diabetes (as it mostly affects children of age 14-16 years). It occurs when the body fails to produce sufficient insulin. People with type I diabetes are insulin-dependent which means they must take artificial insulin daily to stay alive.

- **Type 2 diabetes:** It affects the way the body uses insulin. While the body still makes insulin, unlike in type I, the cells in the body do not respond to it as effectively as they once did. This is also the most common type of diabetes, and it has strong links with obesity.
- **Gestational diabetes:** This type occurs in women during pregnancy when the body sometimes becomes less sensitive to insulin.

❖ **World Press Freedom Index 2021**

(Source: Express)

Why in News: The World Press Freedom Index 2021 released.

World Press Freedom Index

- Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) or Reporters without Borders since 2002.
- The Index ranks 180 countries and regions according to the level of freedom available to journalists. However, the index neither ranks public policies and nor is it an indicator of the quality of journalism in each country or region.
- The index ranks 180 countries based on the following parameters, such as a) pluralism, b) media independence c) environment and self-censorship d) legislative framework e) Transparency f) Infrastructure, and g) Abuses.

Key Findings Related to India:

- India ranks 142nd on the World Press Freedom Index 2021. The rank is the same as in 2020 after it had consistently slid down from 133 in 2016.
- India continues to be counted among the countries classified “bad” for journalism. Similarly, India is termed as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their jobs properly.

Other key Findings: Topped by: Norway tops the index, followed by Finland and Denmark.

- **China:** China ranks 177 in the index. It is only above North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178.
- **India’s South Asian neighborhood:** Nepal is at 106, Sri Lanka at 127, Myanmar (before the coup) at 140, Pakistan at 145, and Bangladesh at 152.

Further, the report shows that journalism is completely or partially blocked in 73% of all the countries on the index

❖ **Global Youth Mobilization initiative for local Solutions** (Source: PIB)

Why in News: United Nations agencies, youth organisations, and WHO have come together to launch the Global Youth Mobilization initiative for local Solutions.

Global Youth Mobilization Initiative

World Health Organization and United Nations Foundation are supporting Global Youth Mobilization Initiative. Whereas, it is led by the world's six largest youth organisations, including

- Firstly, the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations
- Secondly, World Young Women's Christian Association
- Third, the World Organization of the Scout Movement
- Fourth, the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Lastly, The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

Aim: To address the negative impact of the pandemic on young people and support them to build back better.

Funding: Young people from around the world can apply for funding. It will support innovative Local Solutions to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Need of the Initiative

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) terms the current young population as the 'lockdown generation'. As per some estimates, around 90 per cent of young people "reported increased mental anxiety during the pandemic".

Whereas "one in six young people worldwide has lost their jobs during the pandemic"

❖ **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)** (Source: PIB)

Why in News: Union Minister of Commerce & Industry launches the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS).

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)

The scheme was announced during the Prarambh: the 'Startup India International Summit'. This marks the 5-year anniversary of the Startup India initiative.

Objective

- Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) aims to provide financial assistance to startups. Assistance is provided for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry, and commercialization.
- Thus, it would help to grow startups to a beginner's level. After that, startups will be able to raise investments from angel investors or venture capitalists or seek loans from commercial banks or financial institutions.

Implementation

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) constituted An Experts Advisory Committee (EAC) which will be responsible for the overall execution and monitoring of the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme.

Funding:

- Eligible incubators throughout India will hand out funding to eligible startups across India.
- Grants of up to Rs 5 Crores shall be provided to the eligible incubators selected by the EAC.
- The selected incubators shall provide grants of up to Rs 20 lakhs for validation of Proof of Concept, or prototype development, or product trials to startups. After that, Startups will further receive investments of up to Rs 50 lakhs for market entry, commercialization, or scaling up through convertible debentures or debt-linked instruments.

The scheme will have a corpus of Rs. 945 Crore. This will be divided over the next 4 years. Significance of the scheme:

- Secure seed funding
- Inspire innovation
- Support transformative ideas
- Facilitate implementation and
- The Scheme will also create a robust startup ecosystem particularly in Tier 2 and Tier 3 towns of India. These towns lack adequate funding facilities for startups.

❖ Great Indian Bustard

(PIB)

Why in News: A group of hunters shot down two Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) in a protected area of southern Punjab's Cholistan in Pakistan. This has left wildlife activists in India shocked and outraged.

Great Indian Bustard

The Great Indian Bustard is one of the heaviest flying birds in the world.

- **Vegetation:** It inhabits dry grasslands and scrublands on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Flagship Species:** It is the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
- **Habitat:** It is endemic to the Indian subcontinent. In India, the population confines mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat.

In Rajasthan also GIB's population is less than 100. This accounts for 95% of its total world population. **State Bird: GIB is the State bird of Rajasthan.**

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Critically Endangered
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
- **Threats:** The bird under constant threat due to a) Collision/ electrocution with power transmission lines b) Hunting (still prevalent in Pakistan) c) Irrigation and farming technology among others.

Initiatives for Protection of GIB:

Great Indian Bustard Project: It was launched by the Rajasthan Government. It aims at the conservation of the remaining population of Great Indian Bustard locally called Godawan. The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has included the Great Indian Bustard (GIB) under the Species Recovery Program.

❖ National Climate Vulnerability Assessment Report (Source: PIB)

Why in News: The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has released the National climate vulnerability assessment report.

National Climate Vulnerability Assessment Report

- The National Climate Vulnerability Assessment Report identifies the most vulnerable states and districts in India, as per the current climate risk and key drivers of vulnerability.
- Indicators: Several key drivers of Vulnerability used by the report for the assessment, For instance: 1) percentage of the population living below the poverty line; 2) income share from natural resources; 3) Also, the proportion of marginal and small landholdings, 4) women's participation in the workforce, and; 5) the density of healthcare workers among others.
- Participation: Around 24 states and 2 Union Territories participated in the exercise. The DST and the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC) organized it jointly.

Key Findings

- High Climate Vulnerable States: The report identifies eight eastern states as highly vulnerable to climate change: Jharkhand, Mizoram, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal.
- These states are mostly from the eastern part of the country. Thus, they require prioritization of adaptation interventions.
- Lower-middle Vulnerable States: Himachal Pradesh, Telangana, Sikkim, and Punjab.
- Low Vulnerable States: Uttarakhand, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Nagaland, Goa and Maharashtra.
- Climate Vulnerable Districts: The report also identifies Climate Vulnerable districts. According to it, among all states, Assam, Bihar, and Jharkhand have over 60% districts in the category of highly vulnerable.

Significance

The assessment will help Policymakers in taking appropriate climate actions. Further, it will also benefit climate-vulnerable communities across India through development of better-designed climate change adaptation projects.

❖ Country of Particular Concern (CPC)

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: The USCIRF (US Commission on International Religious Freedom) has recommended classifying India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC). It is due to the worst violations of religious freedom in India in 2020.

Reasons for recommendations

USCIRF has recommended India to be put on a Countries of Particular Concern (CPC) list because of:

- Religiously Discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act
- Seeming police complicity in the Delhi riots
- During COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation and hateful rhetoric including from government officials targeted religious minorities.
- Efforts to prohibit interfaith marriage such as those in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh among other reasons.

Suggestions by USCIRF

- The US administration should impose targeted sanctions on Indian individuals and entities for 'severe violations of religious freedom'.
- The US administration should promote interfaith dialogue and the rights of all communities at forums such as Quadrilateral [the Quad].
- S. Congress should raise issues in the U.S-India bilateral space by hosting hearings, writing letters, and constituting Congressional delegations.

Other Recommendations of USCIRF

Other new recommendations by USCIRF for the CPC list 2021 are Russia, Syria, and Vietnam. Moreover, 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.

Special Watch List Countries: Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Russia.

Country of Particular Concern (CPC)

USCIRF recommends the Country of Particular Concern (CPC) designation to the US State Department. It recommends countries engaged in severe violations of religious freedom under IRFA (International Religious Freedom Act) 1998.

The IRFA 1998 promotes religious freedom as a foreign policy of the United States. The countries that receive this designation either engage in or tolerate systematic, ongoing, glaring violations of religious freedom.

In addition to its CPC recommendations, the USCIRF established a Special Watch List countries. The list includes countries which does not fit in the CPC criterion, but still engage in or tolerate severe violations of religious freedom. The recommendations given by the USCIRF are non-binding on the US Government.

❖ **Blue Nature Alliance**

(Down to Earth)

Why in News: Blue Nature Alliance has been launched with a goal to restore 7 million square miles of ocean in five years.

Blue Nature Alliance

- Blue Nature Alliance is a global partnership. It was founded and led by Conservation International, Pew Charitable Trusts, Global Environment Facility (GEF), Minderoo Foundation and Rob & Melani Walton Foundation.
- It aims to safeguard global ocean biodiversity, build resilience to climate change, promote human well-being and enhance ecosystem connectivity.
- The alliance has a target to:
 - Conserve 18 million square kilometers of ocean in five years.
 - Protect 5% of the world's ocean in five years.
 - Help the world achieve 30% ocean conservation by 2030.

The Alliance has started by targeting seven ocean locations. This includes Antarctica, Fiji, Canada, Seychelles, Palau, the Western Indian Ocean and Tristan da Cunha, an island in the South Atlantic Ocean.

The alliance will begin work by working with local communities and national leaders. It aims to establish new marine protected areas (MPAs) and improve the management of existing ones.

Conservation International (CI): Conservation International (CI) is an American nonprofit environmental organization founded in 1987. Its mission is to spotlight and secure the critical benefits that nature provides to humanity such as food, freshwater, livelihoods and a stable climate, etc.

❖ **RESPOND PROGRAM**

(Source: PIB)

Why in News: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced its support to 8 joint research projects of Space Technology Cell (STC), IIT-Delhi. ISRO will support these projects under its RESPOND program.

RESPOND Program

ISRO launched the RESPOND (Research Sponsored) program in the 1970s.

- **Objective:** To establish strong links with premier academic institutions through financial assistance to carry out R&D projects relevant to space. Further, ISRO will derive useful outputs of such R&D projects and use that in ISRO programs
- **Financial Support:** Under the Program, ISRO provides financial support for conducting research and development activities. Projects related to space science, space technology and space applications in universities and academic institutions in India will get such financial support.
- **Administered by:** The program is under the administration of the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL). PRL is an autonomous unit under the Department of Space.
- **Significance:** The research studies conducted under the program will focus on some future Space activities of ISRO. Further, It will also act as a good supplement to various missions undertaken by ISRO.