

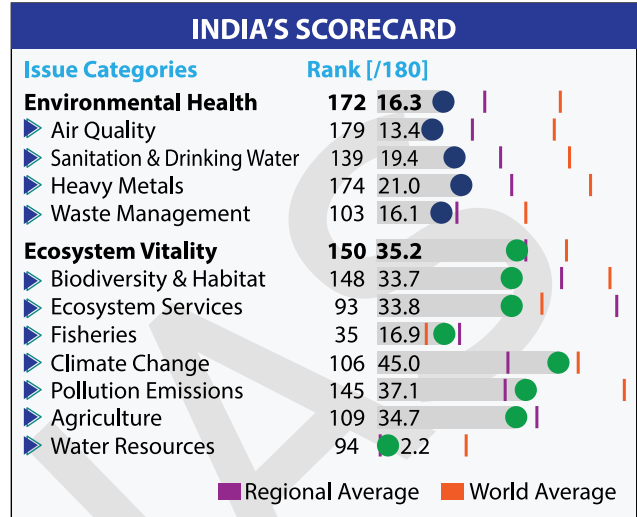
NEWS TODAY

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE INDEX (EPI) 2020 RELEASED BY YALE UNIVERSITY

It is a biennial index which ranks 180 countries on 32 performance indicators across 11 categories covering environmental health and ecosystem vitality.

Key findings

- **India ranked 168 in 2020** while it was 177 in 2018. Denmark Ranked 1.
 - > India scored below the regional average score on all five key parameters on environmental health (refer infographics).
 - > All South Asian countries, except Afghanistan, were ahead of India in the ranking.
- **Report observed that**
 - > **Countries like India** have to redouble national sustainability efforts and focus on critical issues such as air and water quality, biodiversity, and climate change.
 - > **Economic prosperity makes** it possible for nations to invest in green policies and programs.
 - > **Good governance, commitment to rule of law**, vibrant press, and even-handed enforcement of regulations, have strong relationships with top-tier EPI scores.
 - > Global pandemic has made clear the profound interdependence of all nations and **the importance of investing in resilience**.



INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD) RESPONSE TO EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS IMPROVED IN LAST FEW YEARS

- IMD's forecasting of recent cyclones **Amphan** and **Nisarga** on the East and West coast of India were quite accurate, as compared to its earlier forecasts.
 - > IMD under Ministry of Earth Sciences is the National Meteorological Service of the country and principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology, seismology and allied subjects.

Steps taken by IMD

- **Improvements in observatory data collection**
 - > Two high-powered advanced weather satellites, INSAT-3D and INSAT 3D-R, in 2013 and 2016 were launched.
- **Better Weather prediction models:** Data collected from various observatories is simultaneously digitised, processed and is fed into these models.
 - > In 2018, IMD launched a **new Ensemble Prediction Systems (EPS)** to provide probabilistic weather forecasts up to the next 10 days providing better localised predictions.
- **IMD's computing power** increased to 8.6 teraflops from 1 teraflop earlier.
- **New specialized products and forecasts:** Meghdoot App, UMANG App (giving out weather forecast-based agro advisories to farmers) etc.
- IMD is also planning to further **streamline three-tier coordination mechanism** with National Disaster Management Agency, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), & Ministry of Home Affairs; state emergency operations centre and district disaster management officials.

ORDINANCE ISSUED TO SUSPEND INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY CODE (IBC) FOR SIX MONTHS

- The ordinance gives **permanent protection to companies for default during six months** of COVID-19 led crisis that can be extended up to a year through a government notification.
 - > This suspension of IBC will not be applicable to any default committed before March 25, 2020.
- **IBC, 2016 was enacted** for reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms and individuals in a time bound manner. It consolidates all the existing laws related to insolvency in India and simplify the process of insolvency resolution.
 - > When a **default in repayment occurs**, creditors gain control over debtor's assets and must take decisions to resolve insolvency within a 180-day period.
 - > IBC **defines 'default' as non-payment of debt** when whole or any part or instalment of the amount of debt has become due and payable.
 - > **Insolvency** is a situation where individuals or companies are unable to repay their outstanding debt.
 - > **Bankruptcy** filing is a legal course undertaken by the company to free itself from debt obligations.

BOLSTERED MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE (MSP) POLICY HAS LITTLE BEARING ON CROP OUTPUT

- Under MSP policy, government announces **MSP for 22 mandated crops** based on recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.
- **MSP is announced with following objectives:**
 - > Give **guaranteed prices and assured market to farmers** and save them from price fluctuations.
 - > Improving productivity by **encouraging higher investment and adoption of modern technologies** in agriculture.
 - > To **safeguard interests of consumers** by making available supplies at reasonable prices.
 - > Ensure food security.
- MSP is believed to **have an impact on crop production**. However, a recent analysis of kharif and rabi crops suggests that there is **barely any discernible link between the two**, and in few cases, even big drops in crop output followed steep MSP hikes.
 - > Also, **MSP has negative effects** like hampering crop diversification programme by impacting farmers' cultivation preferences, putting high cost on exchequer etc.

Crop (2018-19)	MSP hike	Change in Production
Ragi	52%	Decreased by 38%
Jowar	43%	Decreased by 31%
Cotton	28%	Decreased by 14%

GOVERNMENT MOOTS MONETARY ALLOWANCE TO POOR SC, ST HOUSEHOLDS

- Monetary allowance seeks to revamp SC and ST welfare schemes, namely, **Developmental Action Plan for Scheduled Castes (DAPSC)** and **Scheduled Tribe Component (STC)**.
 - > Move is considered to **address issue of poor utilisation of funds under these two programmes.**
- Earlier, in January 2020 NITI Aayog asked Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to revamp DAPSC and STC. **Revamp Proposals by Ministries included:**
 - > Identifying most deprived SC and ST households as per Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011 and give a **monthly or quarterly allowance on the pattern of PM-KISAN scheme.**
 - > **Fixing allocation for eight key sectors** – education, skill development, income generating activities, agriculture, health, nutrition, infrastructure and housing.
- **Under DAPSC & STC**, 41 central government ministries are required to earmark 2-20% of their total budget outlay for SC and ST welfare schemes.
 - > Ministries are required to identify targeted schemes & earmark funds scheme-wise to different states.
 - > However, Ministries have been struggling to spend earmarked funds and usually do notional allocation i.e. allocation on generic schemes rather than targeted programmes as envisaged under the programmes.

ALSO IN NEWS

<p>Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs roll outs faceless assessment of consignments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under this, consignments will be assessed electronically, irrespective of the port where the goods arrive. • It is part of next generation reforms called 'Turant Customs', aimed at speedy clearance of goods at air and sea ports, which in turn will benefit ease of doing business in India. • First phase will commence in Chennai and Bengaluru. It will cover a specific set of items and will be expanded across India by December 31.
<p>Plan for India's first Coal Exchange</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per the proposal, entire coal produced will be traded on a Coal Exchange, an online platform where pricing is determined transparently through demand and supply. • This could mean end of new Fuel Supply Agreements regime of Coal India where it signs contracts for coal supply with consumers. • It is a step towards completely throwing open the sector to market forces as country gears up for commercial coal mining auctions, which will increase number of sellers of coal.
<p>Atal Research & Innovation for Small Enterprises (ARISE)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council of Scientific and Industrial Research has come together with Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to stimulate innovation and research in MSME industry in collaboration with ARISE initiative of AIM. • ARISE is an initiative to promote research, innovation and competitiveness of Indian startups and small enterprises including Micro, Small, and Medium enterprises (MSME). • It aims to improve India's import substitution capabilities, develop export leadership in nation-critical sectors, and provide indigenous solutions for challenges in India.
<p>Vamsadhara River Water Dispute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dispute is between Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh. • Vamsadhara originates in Odisha and meets Bay of Bengal in Andhra Pradesh. • It lies in between Rushikulya and Godavari rivers. • Vamsadhara Water Disputes Tribunal was constituted in 2010.
<p>TRAFFIC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TRAFFIC is non-governmental organisation working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. • It was established in 1976 by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and World Wide Fund for Nature. • In its latest report titled "Indian wildlife amidst the COVID-19 crisis: An analysis of status of poaching and illegal wildlife trade" points out that reports of poaching for consumption and local trade have more than doubled during lockdown.
<p>Tadoba Andhari tiger reserve</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is located in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra and is also Maharashtra's oldest and largest National Park. • It represents Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Teak Forests in Tiger Habitat.
<p>Molybdenum dioxide (MoO₂)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a low cost and efficient catalyst to generate hydrogen from water. • MoO₂ nanomaterials annealed in hydrogen atmosphere can reduce energy input to bring about water splitting with great efficiency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Electrolytic splitting of water is a promising method to generate hydrogen but requires energy input that can be brought down in presence of a catalyst. • Hydrogen is considered as the future of clean and sustainable energy as it can be generated from water and produces water on energy generation without any carbon footprint.

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