

India and SDGs



- The SDGs framework sets targets for 231 unique indicators across 17 SDG goals related to economic development, social welfare, and environmental sustainability, to be met by 2030.
- The good news is that India is 'On Target' to meet 14 of the 33 SDGs, including indicators for neonatal and under-five mortality, full vaccination, improved sanitation, and electricity access, all of which have substantially improved in the last five years.
- Unfortunately, the national 'On Target' designation does not apply equally across all districts.
- Indicators such as eliminating adolescent pregnancy, reducing multidimensional poverty, and women having bank accounts have improved across a vast majority of the districts between the years 2016 and 2021.
- Of concern, for 19 of the 33 SDG indicators, the current pace of improvement is not enough to meet SDG targets.
- Despite a national policy push for clean fuel for cooking, more than two-thirds (479) of districts remain 'Off Target'. Similarly, some 415 and 278 districts are 'Off Target' for improved water and handwashing facilities, respectively.
- Of heightened concern are SDG indicators for women's well-being and gender inequality.
- No district in India has yet succeeded in eliminating the practice of girl-child marriage before the legal age of 18 years.
- Lessons from the COVID-19 approach.
- First, strong and sustained political leadership supported by a responsive administrative structure at all levels, from national to the district level, was critical to the success both of India's COVID-19 vaccination program and its efficient rollout of a comprehensive relief package.
- Second, India's success with COVID-19 was largely possible both because of the existing digital infrastructure, as well as new, indigenous initiatives such as the

Co-WIN data platform, and the Aarogya Setu application.

- Finally, a targeted SDG strategy delivered at scale must be executed with the same timeliness of India's COVID-19 relief package



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Urbanization and challenges

What role does urbanisation play?

- Cities have witnessed a sharp increase in the stray dog population, which as per the official 2019 livestock census stood at 1.5 crore. However, independent estimates peg the number to be around 6.2 crore.
- The number of dog bites has simultaneously doubled between 2012 and 2020. India also shoulders the highest rabies burden in the world, accounting for a third of global deaths caused due to the disease.
- In 2015, a study conducted in 10 Indian metro cities found a strong

link between the human population, the amount of municipal and food waste generated, and the number of stray dogs in the cities.

- It argued, "In effect, the present mode of urbanization and paradigm of development innately promotes urban sprawls, slums, disparity.
- With the development of cities, managing solid waste has become a daunting challenge," and the "unconfined and unmanaged leftovers" end up aiding the proliferation of stray dogs.
- A study published in 2016 found that the prevalence of dog bites was higher in urban slums usually located in close proximity to dumping sites than in rural slums.

How has India managed the problem?

- India's response to the "stray dog menace" has relied upon the Animal Birth Control (ABC) program, through which municipal bodies trap, sterilize, and release dogs to slow down the dog population.
- The second anchor was rabies control measures, including vaccination drives. But implementation suffers from low awareness around the health implications of dog bites, irregular supply of vaccines, delay in seeking

treatments, and a lack of national policy, experts say.



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Barsu project

What is the Barsu refinery project?

- The project, which is expected to have a capacity of 60 million tonnes per annum, is a joint venture between Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), Indian Oil Corporation Limited, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited.
- The project was initially mooted in 2014 and is estimated to cost around rupees three lakh crore.
- Besides fuel, the project also proposes to develop various downstream petrochemicals to meet India's fast-growing petrochemical demand.
- How have the villagers reacted? Hundreds of residents from Barsu-Solgaon and neighboring villages are protesting the government's decision as they are concerned about the potential

impact on the environment and the livelihoods of local communities.

- The project site is in a region that is ecologically sensitive, with several species of flora and fauna endemic to the area.
- The Konkan region has large mango orchids as well as jackfruit and cashew plantations.
- The villagers also expressed concern about the potential health hazards posed by the refinery and petrochemical unit, which is expected to emit a large amount of pollutants.

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India and Maldives

- The Maldives is one of India's key maritime neighbors in the Indian Ocean region and the overall bilateral ties, including in the areas of defense and security, have been on an upward trajectory in the last few years.
- India's decision to provide military platforms to the Maldives came amid China's persistent efforts to expand its overall influence in the region.
- "India's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) along with its 'Neighbourhood First' policy as well as Maldives' 'India First' policy seek to work together to

jointly develop the capabilities within the Indian Ocean region.



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