

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## India at 75 ranks below more than 100 countries on most development indices

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India celebrated 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day on 15 August 2021, but the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav or India@75 campaign launched earlier this year by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to continue till August 15, 2023. While the celebration of achievements is well earned, it is also necessary to take note of failures as flagged by global indices to take action to convert these into future successes.

Opposition parliamentarian Shashi Tharoor's recent lament about India's rankings on global indices under the BJP government dropping below those during the UPA government may have been selective and politically motivated, but most global indices have been ranking India very low down always. There are a few exceptions. India has made noteworthy progress on the ease of doing business, competitiveness and innovation.

At a holistic level India ranks 120 based on her performance on achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as per the *Sustainable Development Report (2021)* brought out by Jeffrey Sachs and his team at the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). India's low ranking is mirrored by most other reports globally.

According to the *Human Development Report (2020)* by the United Nations Development Programme, India's rank based on parameters of life expectancy at birth, standard of living and education like mean years of schooling stands at 131. The *Global Gender Gap Report (2021)* by the World Economic Forum ranks India at 140 based on criteria like political empowerment, economic

participation and opportunity, educational attainment and health and survival to measure gender equality.

The *Global Hunger Index (2020)* by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe ranks India at 94. The index is based on parameters like undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality rate under 5 years of age to calculate hunger and under-nutrition ranging from severity to no hunger. The *Global Youth Development Index (2020)* brought out by the Commonwealth Secretariat ranks India at 122nd position based on parameters like education, health, employment, equality and inclusion, political and civic participation, peace and security.

An index of high concern during the Covid-19 pandemic, the *Global Health Security Index (2019)*, ranks India at 57. The index uses parameters like prevention, early detection, rapid response, health system quality, standards and risk environment to assesses health security and related capabilities and has been developed by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Health Security (CHS) and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

While health and quality of life are key indicators of development, a big role is being increasingly played by the environment and climate change in influencing the development agenda. The *World Risk Index (2020)* based on analysis of risk of disasters like earthquakes, floods, droughts, storms and sea-level rise ranks India at 89. The index has been formulated by the United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS) and Bundnis Entwicklung Hilft and University of Stuttgart. Similarly, the *Global Climate Risk Index (2021)* by Germanwatch ranks India as the 7<sup>th</sup> worst affected country by climate change based on the analysis of the impact of extreme climatic conditions on a country and its economy.

Apart from natural and human induced climate change risks, India is also highly prone to terrorism risks. The *Global Terrorism Index (2020)* by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has ranked India as the 8th most terrorism affected country in the world.

India is performing badly on other important development indicators, too. The *Democracy Index (2020)* by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) categorises India under flawed democracy regimes with rank 53. Other categories include full democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian

regimes. The *Human Freedom Index* (2020) by Cato Institute and Fraser Institute ranks India at 111 based on civil, economic and personal freedom.

The *Global Economic Freedom Index* (2020) by Canada's Fraser Institute and New Delhi based think tank Centre for Civil Society ranks India at 105. The index measures economic freedom vis-a-vis size of the government, legal system and property rights, sound money, freedom to trade internationally and regulation. The *Corruption Perception Index* (2020) by Transparency International ranks India at 86, and the *World Press Freedom Index* (2021) by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranks India at 142.

At the same time, there are some brighter spots, too. The *Chandler Good Government Index* (2021) by the Chandler Institute of Governance ranks India at 49. The rankings are based on criteria like leadership and foresight, strong institutions, robust laws and policies, attractive market place, financial stewardship, helping people rise and global influence and reputation. The *Ease of Doing Business Report* (2019) by the World Bank ranks India at 63, up from 142 in 2014. The index takes into consideration the ease with which a business can be started in a country.

The *Global Competitive Report* (2021) by the World Economic Forum ranks India at 43. The report is based on criteria like ability to harness existing technology, appropriate infrastructure, developed financial markets, efficient goods markets, efficient labour markets, good health and primary education, higher education and training, innovation, institutions, market size, production of new goods, and stability of macroeconomic framework. The *Global Innovation Index* (2020) by World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), Cornell University and INSEAD Business School, too, has pegged India at 48<sup>th</sup> rank.

It is beyond the scope of this post to list all such indices, but NITI Aayog which is focused on such reporting could well draw up a list of top 75 global indices on the occasion of India@75 and start charting India's periodic progress to better measure and manage India's development progress.