

Current Affairs : 14 July 2022

WEF: INDIA RANKS A LOW 135TH IN GENDER PARITY

In News:

- The Global Gender Gap Index for 2022 has been released by the World Economic Forum (WEF).
- The index ranks India at 135 out of 146 countries. In 2021, India was ranked 140 out of 156 countries.

Global Gender Gap report

- The Global Gender Gap (GGG) report is published annually by the World Economic Forum (WEF). The first report was published in 2006.
 - The report also includes Global Gender Gap Index.
- The index benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity across four key dimensions. These dimensions are:
 - Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.
- It also tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time.

Methodology

- On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the GGG index provides scores between 0 and 1, where 1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity.
- The cross-country comparisons aim to support the identification of the most effective policies to close gender gaps.

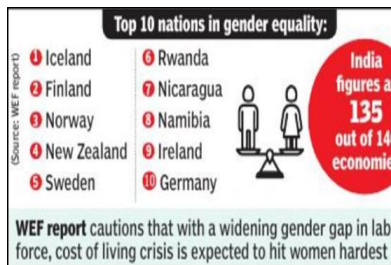
News Summary

- India ranks 135 among a total of 146 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022, published by WEF.

Key Highlights:

- **Time to reach gender parity**

- As per the report, it will take another 132 years (compared to 136 years in 2021) to close the gender gap.
- This is due to the continued disruption caused by the Covid pandemic.
- South Asia will take the longest to reach gender parity, which is estimated to be likely in 197 years.
- **Top performers**
- Although no country achieved full gender parity, the top 10 economies closed at least 80% of their gender gaps.
- Iceland (90.8%) is leading the global ranking. It was the only economy to have closed more than 90% of its gender gap.
- Iceland is followed by Finland, Norway, New Zealand and Sweden.



Performance of India's neighbours

- India also ranks poorly among its neighbours and is behind Bangladesh (71), Nepal (96), Sri Lanka (110), Maldives (117) and Bhutan (126).
- Only Iran (143), Pakistan (145) and Afghanistan (146) perform worse than India in south Asia.

India's performance

Index/sub-index	2022 (146 countries)		2021 (156 countries)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Global Gender Gap Index	135	0.629	140	0.625
Political empowerment	48	0.267	51	0.267
Economic participation & opportunity	143	0.350	151	0.350
Educational attainment	107	0.961	114	0.961
Health and survival	146	0.937	155	0.937

Source: World Economic Forum

- India has approximately 662 million (or 66.2 crore) women.
- In 2022, India's overall score has improved from 0.625 (in 2021) to 0.629.
- India's (135th) global gender gap score has oscillated between 0.593 and 0.683 since the index was first compiled.
- In 2022, India scored 0.629, which is its seventh-highest score in the last 16 years.
- **Political Empowerment**
- This includes metrics such as the percentage of women in Parliament, the percentage of women in ministerial positions etc.
- Of all the sub-indices, this is where India ranks the highest (48th out of 146).

- However, notwithstanding its rank, its score is quite low at 0.267.
- Some of the best ranking countries in this category score much better.
 - g., Iceland is ranked 1 with a score of 0.874 and Bangladesh is ranked 9 with a score of 0.546.
- **Economic Participation and Opportunity**
 - This includes metrics such as the percentage of women who are part of the labour force, wage equality for similar work, earned income etc.
 - Here, too, India ranks a lowly 143 out of the 146 countries even though its score has improved over 2021 from 0.326 to 0.350.
- **Educational Attainment**
 - This sub-index includes metrics such as literacy rate and the enrolment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education.
 - Here India ranks 107th out of 146, and its score has marginally worsened since last year.
- **Health and Survival**
 - This includes two metrics: the sex ratio at birth (in %) and healthy life expectancy (in years).
 - In this metric, India is ranked the last (146) among all the countries. Its score hasn't changed from 2021 when it was ranked 155th out of 156 countries.

FIRST RUSSIAN TRAIN CARRYING CARGO FOR INDIA REACHES IRAN

In News:

- An India-bound Russian cargo, sent by train for the first time using the ambitious the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), has reached Iran after travelling around 3,800 km through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)



- The INSTC is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among **India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia** and **Europe**.
- It is a multi-mode transport project in the sense that it encompasses sea, road, and rail routes.
- Objective: To facilitate transportation between the member countries.
- **Historical Background:**
 - The foundation of the North-South transport corridor was laid in September, 2000 in accordance with an intergovernmental agreement signed between **Russia, Iran,** and **India** in Saint Petersburg, Russia.
 - This agreement has been ratified by 13 countries in total. These countries are:
 - Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Armenia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine.
- **Components:**
 - The project has a number of components –
 - Northern and Western Europe;
 - Russian Federation, Caucasus;
 - Persian Gulf (Western route);
 - Central Asia – Persian Gulf (Eastern route);
 - Caspian Sea – Iran Persian Gulf (Central route);
- **Funding for the Project:**
 - While India has backed the development of the port, free trade zone and railway line at **Chabahar**, Azerbaijan has come to Iran's aid to expedite the completion of the Iranian section of the corridor.
 - Moreover, multilateral organisations are stepping in to support the INSTC in different ways.

Potential Benefits of INSTC:

- The INSTC is seen as a response to China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- The goods sent from Russia to India will take less than 25 days to reach.
- Earlier it used to take 40 days for the arrival of goods between India and Russia.
- It not only saves time in trade between Russia and India, but also it is easiest option among the current geo-political challenges.

- Along with time, the route will reduce the cost of trade between India and Russia by about 30%.

Challenges:

- **Lack of Private sector participation:**

- From the time of its very conceptualisation, the INSTC has failed to secure full-fledged involvement of the private sector.
- The sanctions did play a role in preventing some Western multilateral companies from entering the Iranian market.

- **Lack of application of digital technologies:**

- The lacklustre attitude of the private sector when it comes to participating in developing the corridor, and the accompanying lack in the application of digital technologies, is obstructing the INSTC from emerging as a trade route that will fully cater to the needs of various actors within its business ecosystem.

- **Limitations in structural design:**

- The present design of the INSTC is limited in terms of territorial reach and scope of scaling up businesses.
- Furthermore, there is no joint work-plan/strategic roadmap for developing the corridor and its surrounding business ecosystem.

News Summary:

- An India-bound Russian cargo sent by train for the first time using the ambitious International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) has reached Iran after travelling around 3,800 km through Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.
- From Iran, the cargo will be shipped to India by sea.

INDIA'S CLEAN ENERGY TARGETS

India has achieved clean energy targets nine years ahead of schedule, Union Power Minister R.K. Singh said at the Sydney Energy Forum in Sydney.



About:

- India has installed 162 GW (1 GW is 1,000 MW) of renewable energy capacity, which is 41% of the 402 GW of electricity installed.
- “We reached this target on November 2021 and what our Prime Minister did was ask us to raise our ambition and so in Glasgow (at the UN COP-21) our Prime Minister committed to installing 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030, which would then be 50% of the installed capacity.” Mr. Singh said.
- In 2015, India committed to ensuring that 40% of its energy would be from renewable sources by 2030 as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC).

Sydney Energy Forum

- Ministers from the United States, Japan, India, Indonesia, and the Pacific Island nation of Samoa are attending the forum along with leaders of major companies that are committed to low emissions technologies.
- The forum will “foster connections between investors, business and government with a focus on innovations in key clean energy technologies such as solar, hydrogen, critical minerals and batteries”.

I2U2 SUMMIT

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the First I2U2 (India-Israel-UAE-USA) Leaders’ Virtual Summit on July 14, 2022 along with his Israeli counterpart Yair Lapid, UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the US President Joe Biden.



About:

- The Leaders will discuss the possible joint projects within the framework of I2U2 as well as the other common areas of mutual interest to strengthen the economic partnership in trade and investment in the respective regions and beyond.

- The I2U2 Grouping was conceptualized during the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the four countries held on 18th October last year. Each country also has Sherpa-level interactions regularly to discuss the possible areas of cooperation.
- I2U2 is aimed to encourage joint investments in six mutually identified areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health, and food security.
- It intends to mobilize private sector capital and expertise to help modernize the infrastructure, and low carbon development pathways for the industries, improve public health, and promote the development of critical emerging and green technologies.

WHEN PARTIES CLAIM SYMBOL

Context

- The **Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena** approached the Election Commission of India recently, requesting it to hear its side before deciding claims to the party's bow-arrow symbol.
- The Shiv Sena has lost a large number of members in the **Eknath Shinde-led rebellion** that eventually caused the fall of the Thackeray-led government in Maharashtra.

Background

- Eknath Shinde, who has **claimed** to be the “**original**” **Shiv Sena** on the basis of the **support of more than two-thirds** of the party's legislators in the Maharashtra Assembly, has not officially written to the EC & yet to stake claim to the party symbol.
- However, the Thackeray camp approached the EC as a **pre-emptive move**, confirming that Uddhav Thackeray continues to be the party president as it **fears** that Shinde faction will in all likelihood **freeze the symbol** so that neither of the two sides is able to use it until a final decision is made.
- Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the superintendence, direction and control of elections is vested in the Election Commission.

Significance of Party Symbol

- The symbol of a party is one of extreme relevance to political survival. For many Indian voters who do not read, the symbol is their association with the party when they exercise their franchise. Hence, the importance is given to the symbol of the party.

Earlier disputes over party symbols

- **Tamilnadu:** Soon after the demise of Jayalalithaa in 2016, the AIADMK split into two factions, one led by **VK Sasikala**, Jayalalithaa's longtime aide, and another led by the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu **O Panneerselvam**.
 - In a bid to stake claim to Jayalalithaa legacy, the two factions approached the Election Commission, seeking the party symbol for themselves and finally Panneerselvam faction was allocated the party symbol.
- **Uttar Pradesh:** Just ahead of the 2017 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and his father, Mulayam Singh Yadav, faced off each other for control of the party.
 - The father-son duo moved the poll panel, seeking the cycle symbol. Recognising that the majority of party legislators backed him, the EC granted the symbol to Akhilesh.

Election Commission powers in granting party symbols

- **Allocation in case of split in Party:** Para 15 of the Symbols Order, 1968, specifies that the Commission has the power to recognise as the party, from splinter groups or rival sections, after taking into account all available facts and circumstances of the case and after hearing all the representatives.
- **Binding decision:** The decision of the Commission under Symbols Order, 1968 shall be **binding** on all such rival sections or groups.
- **Applicability:** This applies to disputes in **recognised** national and state parties.
- For splits in **registered but unrecognised** parties, the EC usually **advises** the warring factions to resolve their differences internally or to approach the court.
- **First case decided under Symbols order:** The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's tensions with a rival group within the Indian National Congress party came to a head with the death of President Dr Zakir Hussain in May 3, 1969.
 - The **Congress old guard**, known as the '**Syndicate**' nominated Reddy for the post of President.
 - Indira Gandhi encouraged Vice-President **V V Giri** to contest as an Independent, and called for a "**conscience vote**" in **defiance of the whip** issued by party president.

- After Giri won, **Indira** was **expelled** from the Congress, and the party split into the “old” **Congress (O)** led by Nijalingappa and the “new” **Congress (R)** led by Indira Gandhi.
- The “old” Congress retained the party symbol of a pair of bullocks carrying a yoke and the breakaway faction was given the symbol of a cow with a calf.

Fate of the group that doesn't get parent party's symbol

- **Earlier norm:** In the case of the first Congress split, the EC recognised both the Congress (O) and the breakaway faction whose president was Jagjivan Ram.
- The Congress (O) had a substantial presence in some states and satisfied the criteria fixed for recognition of parties under the Symbols Order. This principle was followed up to 1997.
- **Peculiar situation:** This situation emerged when the Election Commission dealt with the cases of splits in the **Indian National Congress** and **Janata Dal**.
- **Varied factions:** The disputes led to the creation of Himachal Vikas Congress, Manipur State Congress Party, West Bengal Trinamool Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Biju Janata Dal, etc.
- **No recognition:** The EC then did not recognise the new parties as either state or national parties. It felt that merely having MPs and MLAs is not enough, as **the elected representatives** had fought and won polls on tickets of their **parent (undivided) parties**.
- **New rule:** The EC introduced a new rule under which the **splinter group** of the party, other than the group that got the party symbol, had to register itself as a **separate party**, and could **lay claim** to national or state party status only on the basis of its **performance** in state or central elections after registration.

Methods to resolve dispute over party symbols

- **Strength of elected members:** Whenever the EC could not test the strength of rival groups based on support within the party organisation, it took decision based on testing the majority **only** among **elected MPs and MLAs**.

Same symbol for different parties

- **Same constituency:** If the candidates of two parties having the same symbol are pitted against each other in the **same constituency** then, as per provisions of Para 12 of the Symbols Order, 1968, “**free symbols**” will be allotted to both the contestants.

- **Intra-state usage:** While national parties are free to use their 'reserved symbol' across India, the recognised state parties can use their symbols in their states. To use the symbol outside their state, they have to seek the EC's permission.
- **Examples:** In the 2015 Bihar Assembly election, Samajwadi Party, Panthers Party, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Shiv Sena decided to field their candidates. The EC allowed them to use their symbols **except** when the two parties having the **same symbol** chose to contest from the **same constituency**.

Parties having same symbol

- Federal Party of Manipur and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Tamil Nadu use 'Rising Sun' as their symbol.
- Bahujan Samaj Party and Asom Gana Parishad have 'Elephant' as their party symbol.
- Samajwadi Party and Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party contest on 'Cycle' symbol in their respective states.
- Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and Shiv Sena have 'Bow and Arrow' as their election symbol in Jharkhand and Maharashtra respectively.