

Global State of Democracy Index

Why in news?

\n\n

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) recently released its report, “The Global State of Democracy Index (GSoD)”.

\n\n

What is the report on?

\n\n

\n

- The report tried to evaluate the state of democracy in the world by looking at the trends in democratisation from 1975 to 2017.

\n

- The study covers a variety of important indicators such as

\n

\n\n

\n

i. representative government

\n

ii. fundamental rights

\n

iii. checks on the government

\n

iv. impartial administration

\n

v. participatory engagement

\n

\n\n

What are the highlights?

\n\n

\n

- **Representative government** - India and Sri Lanka have maintained relatively high scores in this regard.

\n

- On the other hand, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have had periods of non-elected regimes.

\n

- However, the general trend in South Asia has been positive.

\n

- **Fundamental rights** - South Asia's score matches that of Asia Pacific but it is slightly below the global average.

\n

- At the country level, Afghanistan and Nepal have seen the most improvement.

\n

- Sri Lanka and Pakistan saw a slight decline in this parameter in the 1970s and 1980s.

\n

- India's score has been stable since the late 1970s, but a decline has been observed since 2015.

\n

- **Gender equality** - South Asia, in general, shows a steady improvement in gender equality.

\n

- Nepal fared better than its counterparts.

\n

- However, India's score has been getting low since 2003.

\n

- **Checks on government** - South Asia's score witnessed a steady increase from 1975 to 1994.

\n

- Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan have shown improvement in this indicator.

\n

- Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka have remained relatively stable with scores in line with the global average.

\n

- **Impartial administration** - South Asia follows both the regional and global trends with no significant change, with the exception of improvements in Nepal.

\n

- However, the sub-index "absence of corruption" shows a worrying tendency in South Asia as the region has the lowest scores in the world.

\n

- **Personal integrity and security** - South Asia's scores for electoral participation are in line with the global average but are slightly below the Asia Pacific average.

\n

- Since 1977, India scores well below the world average in this parameter.
\n
- However, a slight increase in voter participation, along with Sri Lanka, was witnessed recently.
\n
- In all, the report stresses on the following indicator for popularity of democracies:
\n

\n\n

- \n
- i. transparency in political processes
\n
- ii. accountability of elected representatives
\n
- iii. basic freedoms for all citizens
\n
- iv. equal rights for women and minorities
\n
- v. high rates of voter participation
\n

\n\n

- \n
- On the other hand, corruption, nepotism and unemployment make people lose faith in democracy.
\n

\n\n

How does India fare in the report?

\n\n

- \n
- The report says that India had done **moderately well** on all the above mentioned indicators.
\n
- The Election Commission's **Systematic Voters Education for Electoral Participation Programme** has played an important role in conducting free and fair elections in the country.
\n
- Also, an **independent judiciary** keeps a check on the government and ensure a transparent and accountable system.
\n
- India witnessed drastic increase in "**Civil society participation**" between

1978 and 2012.

\n

- But after this period, it declined drastically, affecting deliberative decision making in the country.

\n

- On “**media integrity**”, though India fared better than the global and South Asian average between 1994 and 2012, the country’s score has fallen in 2017.

\n

- There has been a significant dip in the country’s record on civil liberties, personal integrity and security, freedom of association, media integrity, gender equality and basic welfare.

\n

\n\n

What is the way forward?

\n\n

\n

- Though India holds the highest rating among South Asian democracies, its performances on several yardsticks makes it a flawed democracy.

\n

- Democracy does not merely mean voting rights for people, but rather empowering people by granting them equality.

\n

- Thus there must be serious introspection among all stakeholders to make the world’s largest democracy the world’s greatest.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n

