Gender Gap Report - India

Why in news?

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The Global Gender Gap Index, 2017 was released recently by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

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What is the Gender Gap Report?

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- The Global Gender Gap index ranks countries on how they are faring to bring gender equality in four broad areas.
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- They are education, economics, health and politics.
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- The index lies between 0 and 1, with 1 denoting complete parity and 0, complete inequality.
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- **Drawbacks** - It is important to note that this index focusses on gender gaps i.e. position of women relative to men.
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- It is not an indicator of the absolute position i.e. women's empowerment.
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- Also, it doesn't include everything that matters for gender equality, but focusses only on a few key measures.
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What are the key findings?

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- India has been ranked 108 out of 144 countries in the recent report.
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- This is a fall of 21 places from the last year's 87, and India's lowest since the index was developed in 2006.

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- **Health** - India fares relatively poor in “health and survival” and is in the bottom four.
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- This is largely due to the losing battle against a falling sex ratio at birth and the lack of access to healthcare.
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- Poor indicators of maternal health including ante-natal care are also the causes.
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- **Economic Opportunity** - “Economic participation and opportunities for women” is another area where India shows lacklustre performance.
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- It includes three indicators:
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i. participation gap (difference in labour force participation)
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ii. remuneration gap (ratio of estimated female-to-male earned income, as well as a qualitative indicator about wage equality for similar work)
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iii. advancement gap (ratio of women to men among legislators, senior officials and managers, technical and professional workers)
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- Notably, despite gains in education, women’s work participation rate stands at an abysmal 27 per cent.
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- The report highlights that even when women earned, they were paid around 60% less than men for similar work done.
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- Around 65% of the work done by women in India is unpaid labour like those at home, in the fields and in childcare.
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- Despite non-discriminatory laws, women's participation in publicly traded companies and in Research and Development roles is poor.
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- Low financial inclusion for women in formal institutions is another serious problem.
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- **Education** - India has fared slightly better at 112 of 144 countries in

education.
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- This is a result of efforts at narrowing the gap in enrolment in primary and secondary education across most states in India.
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- Also, as a country, India is slowly closing the gap in tertiary (higher) education.
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- India also witnesses a less gender difference in science graduation rates.
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- However, there is over-representation of women in Social Sciences, Journalism, etc and under-representation in Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction subjects, etc.
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- **Political Empowerment** - The measure identifies gender gaps in the highest level of political decision-making.
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- It includes the ratio of women to men among ministers, among parliamentarians, and in terms of years in executive office (president or prime minister) over the last 50 years.
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- Having women as heads of state in the last decades is a positive factor for India.
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- However, the report finds that only 12% of legislators in India are women.
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What is desired?

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- The findings suggest that at this rate, it would take centuries to close the wide gap between Indian men and women.
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- It brings out that nearly two decades of economic progress had not led to commensurate strides in women's lives.
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- There is a serious need for re-assessing the ongoing schemes by the governments in this regard.
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- Gender equality has to be mainstreamed into economic policymaking.
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- It is vital that the government reinvest more heavily in the nutrition and

health of women.
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- Greater participation of women in the workforce and especially in leadership roles is crucial for a developed and gender-just society.
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- Clearly, laws alone are inadequate in instituting reforms.
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- Concerted efforts on the parts of organizations to hire more women and overcoming the stereotypes in the social realm are needed.
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Source: Indian Express

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