Global State of Democracy Index

Why in news?

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

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What is the report on?

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- The report tried to evaluate the state of democracy in the world by looking at the trends in democratisation from 1975 to 2017.
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- The study covers a variety of important indicators such as
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i. representative government
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ii. fundamental rights
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iii. checks on the government
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iv. impartial administration
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v. participatory engagement
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What are the highlights?

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

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- On the other hand, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan have had periods of non-elected regimes.
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- However, the general trend in South Asia has been positive.
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- **Fundamental rights** - South Asia's score matches that of Asia Pacific but it is slightly below the global average.
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- At the country level, Afghanistan and Nepal have seen the most improvement.
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- Sri Lanka and Pakistan saw a slight decline in this parameter in the 1970s and 1980s.
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- India’s score has been stable since the late 1970s, but a decline has been observed since 2015.
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- **Gender equality** - South Asia, in general, shows a steady improvement in gender equality.
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- Nepal fared better than its counterparts.
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- However, India’s score has been getting low since 2003.
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- **Checks on government** - South Asia’s score witnessed a steady increase from 1975 to 1994.
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- Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan have shown improvement in this indicator.
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- Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka have remained relatively stable with scores in line with the global average.
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- **Impartial administration** - South Asia follows both the regional and global trends with no significant change, with the exception of improvements in Nepal.
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- However, the sub-index **“**absence of corruption**”** shows a worrying tendency in South Asia as the region has the lowest scores in the world.
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- **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.
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- Since 1977, India scores well below the world average in this parameter.
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- However, a slight increase in voter participation, along with Sri Lanka, was witnessed recently.
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- In all, the report stresses on the following indicator for popularity of democracies:
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i. transparency in political processes
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ii. accountability of elected representatives
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iii. basic freedoms for all citizens
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iv. equal rights for women and minorities
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v. high rates of voter participation
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- On the other hand, corruption, nepotism and unemployment make people lose faith in democracy.
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How does India fare in the report?

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- The report says that India had done **moderately well** on all the above mentioned indicators.
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- 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.
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- Also, an **independent judiciary** keeps a check on the government and ensure a transparent and accountable system.
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- India witnessed drastic increase in **"Civil society participation"** between

1978 and 2012.
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- But after this period, it declined drastically, affecting deliberative decision making in the country.
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- 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.
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- 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.
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What is the way forward?

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- Though India holds the highest rating among South Asian democracies, its performances on several yardsticks makes it a flawed democracy.
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- Democracy does not merely mean voting rights for people, but rather empowering people by granting them equality.
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- Thus there must be serious introspection among all stakeholders to make the world's largest democracy the world's greatest.
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Source: The Indian Express

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