India’s Concern on Global Hunger Index

Why in news?

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Global Hunger Index (GHI) brought out by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide has been released.

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What is global hunger Index?

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- Every year the Global Hunger Index (GHI) is released by Welthungerhilfe and Concern Worldwide
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- GHI defines “hunger” not in terms of calories consumed but by using four specific parameters, namely the prevalence of
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1. Undernourishment,
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2. Child stunting (that is, low height compared to their age),
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3. Child wasting (that is, low weight for their age),
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4. Child mortality.
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- GHI tracks the state of hunger worldwide and spotlights those places where action to address hunger is most urgently needed.
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What are the issues spotlighted on India?

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- The GHI has ranked 119 countries and India is pegged at 103, where it is marginally better than Pakistan (106) and North Korea (109).
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- India is considerably behind other neighbours such as Nepal (72) and Sri Lanka (67).
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- India also fares rather poorly with other countries, which might be considered comparable on other parameters such as Indonesia (73) or South Africa (60) and Brazil (31).
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- Quite distinct from the other three parameters, in India child wasting has actually gone up over these years from 17.1 per cent to 21 per cent.
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What is the actual hunger status of India?

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- India continues to stay in the “serious” category of the GHI, there are still way too many children suffering from stunting, which reflects chronic undernourishment.
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- Apart from this the biggest worry is the level of wasting in Indian children.
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- Wasting reflects acute malnutrition and the fact that it has gone up sharply in the past 5 to 10 years, as the data shows, is a massive blot on India’s growth story.
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- In India sharp improvements in other parameters were registered after 2005 when numerous policy attempts were made both at the central and state levels such as hunger missions launched by Maharashtra to directly attack the problem of widespread hunger.
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- This also coincided with the rights-based approach where mid-day meals and nutrition of mothers were also improved.
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What is the way forward?

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- The solution to address the issues lies in adequately distributing nutritious food and health care services to children and lactating mothers.
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- But, as various researchers have shown, child undernourishment does not go away by merely having more food grain output.
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- It is the distribution, along with timely availability of food that matters.
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- For a country that aspires to be a permanent member of the UN Security Council, India must strive to secure nutrition for its children and ensure timely delivery of food.
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Source: Business Standard

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