State of Democracy in the World in 2018

Why in news?

The "State of Democracy in the World in 2018" index report titled "Me Too? Political participation, protest and democracy" was published recently.

What is the report on?

- The Democracy Index 2018 measures the state of democracy in 167 countries based on 5 parameters which are:

i. electoral process and pluralism
ii. civil liberties
iii. functioning of the government
iv. political participation
v. political culture

- It was published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) which is a global team of economists, industry specialists, policy analysts and consultants.
- It produces data, research and analysis on everything from national elections and international trade, to food security and sustainable cities.

What are the highlights?

- **Classification** - The index classifies countries into 4 types - Full Democracies, Flawed Democracies, Hybrid Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes.
- Only 20 countries (4.5% of the world population) are full democracies, down from around 11% at the start of this decade.
- Most of the shift has taken place into flawed democracies, which constitute the largest group with 43% of the world's population.
- A third of the world lives under authoritarian governments, the majority being in China.
- **Rankings** - The top 5 are Norway (scoring 9.87 out of 10), Iceland, Sweden, New Zealand and Denmark.
- Nordic democracies continue to top the rankings year after year.
- They exhibit high political participation, robust welfare state, progressive workers' rights and environmental standards.
- The bottom five are generally war-ravaged nations with highly authoritarian

regimes.
- These include Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and North Korea.
- North Korea is placed at the bottom, scoring an abysmal 1.08 out of 10.

- **SAARC** - Among the SAARC countries, India (41) and Sri Lanka (71) are classified as flawed democracies.
- Bangladesh (88), Bhutan (94) and Nepal (97) are categorised as hybrid regimes (mix of democratic and autocratic traits).
- Pakistan (112) and Afghanistan (143) fall under authoritarian regime.
- The Maldives is not being ranked on the index.
- Sri Lanka registered the worst fall among all countries in South Asia.
- It witnesses deteriorating 'civil liberties' and 'functioning of the government' in the wake of the recent constitutional crisis.
- **Voters' sentiment** - Voter turnout was on the rise in 2018, in expression of dissatisfaction with political parties and "formal political institutions".
- The culture of protest is on the rise, with a number of demonstrations around the world for varied causes.
- The rise of social media has made public outreach quicker and easier, making lawful assembly an increasing trend.
- The report concludes that citizens are “turning anger into action”.
- **Participation of women** - Positive political discrimination and quotas for women candidates have made parliaments more inclusive.
- Japan introduced women’s quota legislation in 2018.
- In the Indian subcontinent, Nepal tops South Asia in women’s representation, with 33% reservation for women in Parliament and a record 40% of women in local bodies.
- Bangladesh has 14% reserved seats and Pakistan also reserves 17% and 15% in the Lower and Upper Houses respectively.
- [The Indian Parliament should also consider passing the Bill on reservation for women.]
- **Individual parameters** - 4 out of 5 attributes of the Democracy Index either showed stagnation or improvement for the whole world.
- This is except for “civil liberties” which is on continuous decline since 2008.
- “Functioning of the government” remains at the bottom of the score card, with hardly any improvement from a high of 5.0 since 2008.
- As a whole, the score for perception of democracy as a sub-attribute suffered its biggest fall in the index since 2010.
- This indicates that people are losing faith in the capability of democracy to deliver basic goods and utilities.

What is the case with India?

- India reached it's highest-ever position of 27 in 2014 (just two ranks away from becoming a full democracy).
- Unfortunately, last year, India had slipped to 42, ranking below Latvia and South Africa.
- India has improved one rank this year to 41, but there has been no improvement in scores, which continued at 7.23 out of 10.
- India is now a mid-range country among flawed democracies.
- It has a high score of 9.17 in electoral process and pluralism but moderate record in rest of the parameters with scores not crossing 7.5.
- This confirms the paradox of India as the world’s largest electoral wonder, but a flawed democracy.

What affects India's rankings?

- According to the last two reports, there is a rise of “conservative religious ideologies” in the country.
- Vigilantism, violence, narrowing scope for dissent, threat to minorities and marginalised groups has affected India's ranking.
- Journalists are increasingly under attack, with murders taking place in several areas.
- As a result of limited scope for fair reportage, the Indian media is classified as only “partially free”.
- This is a fact which is also supported by the “Freedom in the World Report, 2018”.

Source: Indian Express

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