World Happiness Report 2017

Why in news?

\n\n

World Happiness Report 2017 was released recently at the United Nations at an event celebrating International Day of Happiness.

\n\n

What are the criteria for the ranking?

\n\n

The happiness rankings are based on six factors.

\n\n

\n
- GDP per capita
\n
- Healthy years of life expectancy,
\n
- Social Support,
\n
- Trust (measured by a perceived absence of corruption),
\n
- Perceived Freedom to make life decisions &
\n
- Generosity (measured by recent donations).
\n
- The 2017 report also included a chapter on ‘Happiness at Work’ as the numbers of hours spent at work are usually a big part of people’s lifetimes.
\n

\n\n

What are the findings of the report?

\n\n

\n

- Norway emerged at the top, displacing three-time topper Denmark.
\n
- Denmark dropped to second place, followed by Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand.
\n
- Australia and Sweden are tied for ninth place.
\n
- The US came in 14th place, dropping one place.
\n
- The report also points out that happiness is falling in the US, primarily due to social causes rather than economic.
\n
- Germany came in 16th place for the second time, UK moved up four spots to 19th place and Russia moved up seven spots to 49th place.
\n
- Japan moved up two spots to 51st place, while China moved up four spots to 79th place.
\n
- Five bottom-most countries on the 155 countries list are Burundi, Tanzania, Syria, Rwanda and the Central African Republic.
\n
- The report finds that the overwhelming importance of having a job helps in inducing happiness.
\n
- People with a job evaluate the quality of their lives much more favourably than those who are unemployed.
\n
- The data also shows that rising unemployment negatively affects everyone, even those still employed.
\n

\n\n

Where does India stand?

\n\n

\n
- India is among the world’s least happy nations.
\n
- It always stood lower than Pakistan, China and Bangladesh.
\n
- Its ranking has been declining steadily from 111st in 2013 to 118th in 2016.
\n

- It is now ranked at 122 out of 155 countries, irrespective of the progress in per capita GDP over these years.
\n

\n\n

What are the reasons for the poor ranking?

\n\n

\n
- **Economy -** There is a huge disparity in the purchasing power of the Indian population.
\n
- Nearly one-fourth of the population still is lives below the poverty line.
\n
- According to a 2016 World Bank report, India has the most number of people i.e about 224 million, in the world living below the international poverty line of $1.90.
\n
- Though, economics are not the only indicator of happiness, it is a necessary factor.
\n
- Poverty also brings malnutrition and abysmal public health for a huge section of the population.
\n

\n\n

· **Opportunities -** Opportunities for development and acquiring knowledge and skills for gainful employment are at the heart of happiness. India lags here too.

\n\n

\n
- Access to education beyond higher secondary schooling is a restricted to a mere 10% among the university-age population in India.
\n
- The disparity exists across genders, socio-economic religious groups and geographical regions.
\n
- There is a huge shortfall in public infrastructure for education.
\n
- Fewer higher education institutions necessitate fierce competition among scores of contenders, inducing undue amounts of stress on young students.

\n
- This combined with social perception of success and pressure to keeps a majority of young individuals from reaching a place of satisfaction and stability.
\n
- **Women Safety - Lack of safety and security to women is also** a key factor to low societal happiness.
\n
- According to NCRB, crime against women grew by 34% between 2012-15.
\n
- **Liberty -** India also lacks in p**erception of personal liberties.**
\n
- Events like Supreme Court's order about National anthem in cinemas, the politicisation of universities or violence against creative expression like movies contribute to this sense of insecurity.
\n
- **Mental Health -** While India has made significant strides in the public health sector since independence, mental health care continues to be grossly underfunded.
\n
- The government spends only 0.06% of its total health spending on mental care, while U.S. spends around 6%, UK 10% and Bangladesh 0.44 %.
\n
- But at least 7% of Indians suffer from mental health problems.
\n
- Also the psychiatrist to population ratio currently remains a grossly inadequate at 1/2-3 lakh people.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express, Livemint

\n

