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WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT



(Source: <http://worldhappiness.report/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/03/170320-whr-2017-happy-ppl-ctr.jpg>)

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Lead Essay

World Happiness Report: Analyzing India's Rank

Introduction

For the last five years happiness has been identified as an indicator of sustainable development by the United Nations (UN). By adopting happiness as a development goal the United Nation aims to frame policies that determine the wellbeing of individuals. The UN General Assembly on July 2011, invited its member states to undertake measures that cater to happiness and wellbeing needs of individuals (UN News Centre, 2011). The resolution was adopted without a vote and member countries were invited “to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development with a view to guiding their public policies” (United Nations, 2011). The UN resolution urged its member countries to recognize happiness as a fundamental right and to note that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does not adequately represent the happiness and wellbeing of people in a country.

The resolution of the United Nations 2011 was drawn from the example of Bhutan. In 1972, the King of Bhutan, coined the term Gross National Happiness and suggested that countries should not be measured only on GDP. Since then, Bhutan has been trying to put happiness on the global agenda (GNH Survey, 2010). Finally in 2011, the United Nations acknowledged the efforts of Bhutan and urged all member countries to view human progress more than economic growth. Following the resolution, in April 2012, a conference was organized in New York, the UN Headquarters to discuss the first World Happiness Report (Helliwell et al, 2012). Since 2012, the World Happiness Report is released annually in March. Post the inclusion of happiness as a development agenda, the World Happiness Report is considered to be the most significant survey of happiness all over the world. Within the Happiness Report, India's rank has always been low. However in the latest report, India has had one of the lowest ranks in the last five years. In this context a closer analysis of India's rank in the latest report as well as a comparison of India's rank in the last few years is important to understand why India is consistently performing poorly in the survey.

Data Collection

Data is collected from 150 countries. Each variable measured reveals a populated-weighted average score on a scale running from 0 to 10 that is tracked over time and compared against other countries. These variables include: real GDP per capita, social support (as measured by having someone to count on in times of trouble), healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity (recent donations) and trust (absence of corruption in government and business) (Livemint, March 20th, 2017). A brief understanding of the variables is as follows:

- **Real GDP per capita:** The production and distribution of goods and services form the GDP of every country. However in this report the focus is on individual sacrifice of rewards for the common good.
- **Social Support:** This variable indicates if every individual has any one person to count on in times of trouble or crisis. The person could be in the neighborhood, workplace, street or even within the household.
- **Healthy Life Expectancy:** This focuses on health inequalities and particularly measures the access to health care facilities in the country. In addition to access, this variable also measures how social integration and emotional support can help reduce mental health.

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- **Freedom to make life choices:** Through this variable the report measures the freedom individuals in every country have to make their own life choices regarding place of education, workplaces and life partner.
- **Generosity:** This variable is not measured only monetarily. It also analyzes how pro social the individuals of a country are. The more the citizens of the country contribute in giving up self interest and perform tasks for the benefit of the whole country, the more generous the country is considered to be.
- **Trust:** This variable measures the perceptions of individuals on corruption in government and business in a country. The aim of the variable is to understand if individuals trust the political system of the country.

An examination of each of the variables indicates that all the variables are interlinked and a low score on one of the variables will result in subsequent lower scores in all the variables. Data from each country is then compared against a hypothetical nation called Dystopia. Dystopia represents the lowest national averages for each key variable and is, along with residual error, used as a regression benchmark.

Major Rank Holders

The first position in the global happiness ranking of 2017 has been taken by Norway followed by Denmark, Iceland and Switzerland. Despite poor oil prices Norway secured the top rank. Through mutual trust and good governance, Norway produced its oil slowly and invested the proceeds for the future. In Denmark, 40% of the population is involved in community service by doing voluntary work in NGOs, social and political organizations. The Danes offer their services for free to work for the common good of the country. Iceland offers free education to children between 16 to 20 years of age in public schools. In Switzerland private health insurance is compulsory for all residents. Health insurers are required to provide basic insurance to all residents regardless of age and medical conditions (World Happiness Report, 2017). As a result Switzerland is one of the healthiest countries in the world (Lancet, 2016). To summarize it could be suggested that mutual trust and cohesion were the main reasons to secure top positions in the Happiness Index. The report also highlighted that in Western countries such as USA, Britain and Australia mental health emerged to be the major cause of misery. Findings from the report also indicated that due to the lack of support from the extended family, having a spouse is crucial to reduce suffering in the Western countries. In contrast to the Western countries, unemployment emerged as the major cause of misery in the Third World countries (World Happiness Report, 2017). Within the World Happiness Report, 2017, all the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations secured ranks below 50. The next section focuses on the ranking of SAARC nations with a special focus on India.

SAARC Nations

As indicated the SAARC nations feature poorly in the World Happiness Report (WHR), 2017. The table below highlights the rankings of the SAARC nations and also provides their score on each of the variables.

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Table 1: Ranking and Variable Scores of SAARC Nations

| Rank 2017 | Country | Overall Score | GDP per capita | Social Support | Healthy life expectancy | Freedom to make life choices | Generosity | Trust | Dystopia |
|-----------|-------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------|-------|----------|
| 80 | Pakistan | 5.269 | 0.727 | 0.673 | 0.402 | 0.235 | 0.315 | 0.124 | 2.792 |
| 97 | Bhutan | 5.011 | 0.885 | 1.340 | 0.496 | 0.502 | 0.474 | 0.173 | 1.140 |
| 99 | Nepal | 4.962 | 0.480 | 1.179 | 0.504 | 0.440 | 0.394 | 0.073 | 1.891 |
| 110 | Bangladesh | 4.608 | 0.587 | 0.735 | 0.533 | 0.478 | 0.172 | 0.124 | 1.979 |
| 120 | Sri Lanka | 4.440 | 1.010 | 1.260 | 0.625 | 0.561 | 0.491 | 0.074 | 0.491 |
| 122 | India | 4.315 | 0.792 | 0.754 | 0.455 | 0.470 | 0.232 | 0.092 | 1.519 |
| 141 | Afghanistan | 3.794 | 0.401 | 0.582 | 0.181 | 0.106 | 0.312 | 0.061 | 2.151 |

(Source: World Happiness Report, 2017)

As indicated in Table 1, India scores poorly in all the variables and secures a low rank within the SAARC Nations. Poorer countries such as Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh have performed better than India which has a higher GDP as compared to these countries. In this context an analysis of India's performance is necessary.

Understanding India's Rank

In the first quarter of the year, India's GDP was 7.1% and is expected to go up to 7.4% in the next year and remain ahead of China (Central Statistics Office, 2017). Despite high growth rate, India's rank remains low in the Happiness Index. The paradoxical relationship between growth and happiness, urges a closer analysis of the problem. Some major concerns such as high rates of inequality, population growth and unemployment could be attributed to India's poor performance in the Happiness Index.

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- **High rates of Inequality:** A high growth rate does not indicate that all citizens of the country have equal access to resources. According to a World Bank Report (2016), India has the highest number of people (224 million) living below the international poverty line. This clearly indicates that wealth accumulation in India is not equally distributed and large sections of the population are subjected to poverty, malnutrition and lack of access to health facilities. While poverty and monetary indicators are not variables in the World Happiness Report, however they do determine healthy life expectancy and freedom to make life choices.
- **High rates of Population:** One of India's biggest challenges is the growing population. Currently, India is the second most populated country in the world. With such high rates of population, it becomes very difficult for the Government of India to provide equal access to infrastructure, health and education.
- **Burden of family planning on women:** Though, population remains a major concern for India, the family planning measures introduced by the Government of India put the burden entirely on women. Recently female sterilization emerged as a major cause for the death of several women in India. From 2014-15, 98% of the sterilizations were tubectomies (Varma, 2014). India continues to be under the garb of patriarchy and women are forced to undergo surgeries to prevent pregnancies. Till the time, women secure rights over their own bodies and both men and women contribute equally to birth control; it is difficult for India's rank to improve in the Happiness Index.
- **Mental Health:** Last month the Government of India launched the National Health Policy. However within the policy there was no mention of mental health. There are more than 7 crore mentally ill people in India (Kulkarni and Gaiha, 2017). There are 0.30 psychiatrists, 0.17 nurses, and 0.05 psychologists per 1, 00,000 mentally ill patients in the country (Kulkarni and Gaiha, 2017). The Government of India recently passed the Mental Healthcare Bill which focuses on infrastructure and access to mental health facilities. But the Bill does not address the stigma attached to mental health diseases. Many mental health issues are not reported and as a result do not receive adequate care. While the Bill focuses on structural changes, it does not mention how the quality of care will be monitored and regulated. With mental health being such a major concern, it is difficult to score high in the Happiness Index.
- **High rates of unemployment:** The World Happiness Report 2017, states that unemployment is one of the major causes of misery in the Third World Countries. India's unemployment has gone up from 3.8% to 5% in 2017 (Hindustan Times, 2017). With growing rates of unemployment, the stress levels are bound to increase. This in turn will negatively impact the happiness levels of the country.

India's rank has been consistently falling from 111 (2014) to 117 (2015) to 118 (2016) to 122 (2017). Despite India's poor performance, the Government of India is not considering happiness as a development goal.

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Conclusion

India's rank in the World Happiness Report 2017 is a reminder that high growth rate does not determine happiness. India has obtained low scores on all the variables which highlights that there is a lack of social cohesion among citizens of India. A poor score on healthy life expectancy suggests that India is not able to provide equal health care facilities to all its citizens. In fact, most rural areas of India do not have proper hospitals and trained doctors. The high rates of mental health indicate that most individuals do not have anyone to count on during times of crisis. India also has performed inadequately with regard to freedom of life choices. Due to lack of employment opportunities, individuals are forced to take up jobs that are available. In particular often children in rural areas have to drop out from school to earn money for their household. Additionally even with respect to life partners inter caste and inter religion marriages continue to be a taboo in Indian society. Hence clearly there are restrictions on the major life decisions that individuals undertake in India. A low score in generosity highlights the high rates of inequality and unequal distribution of wealth, which further indicates that the rich are not sacrificing their self interests for the poor. A poor performance in all the indicators demonstrates that the Government of India has failed to satisfy the well being of individuals. Hence, the citizens of India have such low levels of trust in the political system of the country. Merely achieving growth rate is not sufficient, unless concerns such as inequality and unemployment are resolved. The Government of India should realize that the huge gap between the rich and the poor is the main cause of misery in the country. To achieve a better rank in the next World Happiness Report, the Government of India should frame policies which will reduce inequality, provide equal rights to women and improve mental healthcare facilities. Finally with the rising rates of unemployment, the Government of India should particularly create more jobs for the Indian youth to increase the satisfaction levels.

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Headline

Global economics: Why financial cycles matter

(Live Mint, April 24, 2017)

The upshot is that the post-2009 policy response, aimed at boosting aggregate demand through fiscal expansion and low interest rates, has its limitations unless the structural issues on the supply side are also dealt with. In other words, structural slowdowns cannot be tackled with demand stimulus alone. They require structural reforms.

The BIS view leads to one conclusion that is very relevant for our times. The overdependence on monetary expansion to deal with what is actually a structural problem in the world economy has led policymakers to focus on closing output gaps while they have been relatively more sanguine about other risks. And these risks are evident: excess credit growth, rising property prices, increasing debt service ratio and frothy asset markets. These could be the forerunners of another financial crisis in the future.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/i4MxxcuVBmAlL2MQv6HusJ/Global-economics-Why-financial-cycles-matter.html>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Economy

Regulating Bitcoin in India

(The Centre for Internet and Society, April 20, 2017)

The article discusses the possible contours of future bitcoin regulation in India. Bitcoin, often considered a ‘notorious’ virtual currency limited only to techies or speculators, is currently fighting a battle to become a bona fide mainstream means of exchange.

Read more: <http://cis-india.org/internet-governance/blog/regulating-bitcoin-in-india>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Governance & Development

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

Niti Aayog meet: States to get greater say in new national planning regime

(Gireesh Chandra Prasad, *Live mint*, April 24, 2017)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and state chief ministers on Sunday considered a new approach in policy planning that aims to give states a greater say in determining national priorities—including in internal security and defence—set out in a 15-year vision and a draft three-year short-term action plan ending 2019-20.

The vision document and the draft 300-point action plan prepared with suggestions from states and gram sabhas rest upon the spirit of cooperative federalism that succeeds the Nehruvian era's centralized five-year planning that drew to a close on 31 March with the end of the 12th five year plan. They were discussed as part of the Niti Aayog's third governing body meeting. The vision document projects the economy to grow more than three-fold to Rs469 lakh crore by 2031-32, from Rs137 lakh crore in 2015-16, assuming an 8% annual growth.

Read More: <http://www.livemint.com/Politics/qnSuwMrK7AHhit49USYIhM/Niti-Aayog-meet-States-to-get-greater-say-in-new-national-p.html>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

DEVELOPMENT

PM asks States to Speed Up Infrastructure Development

(*The Tribune*, April 23, 2017)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called upon states to "speed up capital expenditure and infrastructure creation" to spur economic growth. Stating that poor infrastructure in the country is hampering economic development, Modi said more expenditure on basic infrastructure such as roads, ports, power and rail would help in accelerating the pace of growth.

Read more: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/pm-asks-states-to-speed-up-infrastructure-development/396380.html>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

HEALTH

Aspiring for Universal Health Coverage through Private Care

(Bijoya Roy, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 April, 2017)

The healthcare system in India is remarkably privatised with stagnating healthcare expenditure over the past few decades. The poor and vulnerable groups have limited access to it. The third National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 assures progressive universal health coverage (UHC) with general taxation as one of the main elements to finance care. It assures free comprehensive primary care through "Health and Wellness Centres," and reorientation of the public sector hospitals with free drugs and diagnostics with an overall emphasis on a larger role for the private sector in provisioning.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/16/commentary/aspiring-universal-health-coverage-through-private-care.html#sthash.jM0hXwJ7.dpuf>.

Date of Access: 24.4.2017

Governance & Development

ENVIRONMENT

Shocked at Sri Sri Ravi Shankar Blaming Us for Yamuna Damage: NGT

(*The Quint*, 20 April, 2017)

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday directed Art of Living and other parties to file a reply and objections to the expert panel report on Yamuna floodplains damage due to the cultural extravaganza that was held over three days in March in 2016. An expert committee had told the NGT that a whopping Rs 42.02 crore would be required to restore Yamuna floodplains which was ravaged due to a cultural extravaganza organised by AOL last year. The expert panel has suggested that there would be two components of rehabilitation plan – physical and biological, and they would cost Rs 28.73 crore and Rs 13.29 crore respectively, besides additional ancillary expenses.

Read More: <https://www.thequint.com/environment/2017/04/20/art-of-living-ravi-shankar-on-yamuna-floodplain-destruction>.

Date of Access: 24.04.2017

AGRICULTURE

From plate to plough: The faraway fields

(Ashok Gulati & Siraj Hussain, *The Indian Express*, April 24, 2017)

In the first three years of the Modi government, agri-GDP grew by just 1.7 per cent per annum, which is less than half of what was achieved during the last three years of the UPA government (3.6 per cent).

Such a poor performance was caused primarily by droughts in 2014 and 2015. In order to tackle droughts more effectively, the Modi government tweaked and improvised existing schemes and launched the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). Also, a new scheme, the e-National Agriculture Market (e-NAM), was launched to link 585 regulated agri-markets across the country.

Read More: <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/farmer-subsidies-modi-government-agriculture-policies-growth-farmer-protest-4625288/>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

New tool tracks water usage in agriculture

(Deepanwita Niyogi, *Down To Earth*, April 21, 2017)

A tool now makes it possible to measure water efficiency in the agriculture sector. Developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the WaPOR open-access database will help farmers optimise irrigation in water-scarce countries.

Using satellite data provided by Google Earth, the tool analyses water utilisation in farming systems, generating evidence about how it can be most productively used.

Speaking about the programme, FAO expert Livia Peiser said, “The programme (WaPOR) aims at increasing water productivity in agriculture. It starts with monitoring it, but it will also identify suitable options for closing productivity gaps, and explore possibilities for yield increases and reduction of non-beneficial water consumption.” Right now, WaPOR covers Africa and the Near East, but according to Peiser there is a growing interest to expand it.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/new-tool-tracks-water-usage-in-agriculture-57663>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Society

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Terror, Innocence and the Wages of Official Prejudice

(Harsh Mander, *The Economic and Political Weekly*, April 22, 2017)

Public awareness of the scale of continuing state injustice in India is not very high, this article points out. It goes on to show that a telling selectivity in popular outrage and the application of the majesty of the law reveal a troubling majoritarian bias in society and the law. This does not sit well with the Constitution's promise of equal treatment to all before the law.

Read more: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/16/perspectives/terror-innocence-and-wages-official-prejudice.html#sthash.nmOOTV0i.dpuf>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Opinions/Books

OPINION

Cultural Nationalism is Disturbing – Justice A.P. Shah

(The Bloomberg Quint, April 21, 2017)

Justice Shah began by pointing out that in any society, at any given point of time, there will always be people holding divergent views. Such views are integral and inevitable in a healthy, functioning democracy. However, he added, our institutions of learning are under attack today, and there is a concerted attempt to destroy any independent thought.

Read more: <https://www.bloombergquint.com/markets/2017/04/24/live-nifty-set-to-open-higher-investors-swing-back-into-risk-taking-mode>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Forget what a Hindu rashtra will mean for minorities. What will it mean for Hindus?

(Saba Naqvi, Scroll.in, 24 April, 2017)

The secular model currently offers no counter-narrative to challenge Hindutva that claims to unite people above caste and region. Constitutionally and legally, we cannot be a Hindu rashtra but Uttar Pradesh 2017 is the point where I believe that in spirit we became one. I did not think so in (the general elections of) 2014, which I saw as an extraordinary mandate where a party (the Bharatiya Janata Party) won a simple majority with the lowest ever percentage of votes – 31%. In 2017, after a magnificent victory (in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections), India's ruling party has chosen a religious leader or monk (Adityanath) to lead the nation's largest state. A few days after being chosen, he said there is nothing wrong in India being a Hindu rashtra.

Read More: <https://scroll.in/article/835302/up-2017-is-the-point-at-which-we-became-a-hindu-rashtra-in-spirit-saba-naqvi>.

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At war with itself

(The Hindu, April 24, 2017)

The attack on a military base in Afghanistan on Friday, in which at least 140 people, mostly unarmed soldiers, died, speaks volumes about the state of security in the war-ravaged country. It was the deadliest attack by the Afghan Taliban since they were ousted from power in 2001. The 209th Army Corps base in Balkh province that was targeted is the army's northern headquarters, responsible for security in nine of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. By running over such a fortified structure, the Taliban are effectively challenging the professionalism, resolve and resources of the entire force. Over the last few years, the Taliban had lost two of their topmost leaders. Besides, there were reports of factionalism and infighting within the group after the death of Mullah Omar. Yet, the Taliban made steady and substantial gains in the civil war over the last couple of years, since most American troops withdrew from Afghanistan as part of the drawdown plan.

Read More: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/at-war-with-itself/article18196850.ece>

Date Accessed: 24.04.2017

Meat Matters

(Jitendra and Ishan Kukreti, Down to Earth, 20 April, 2017)

Slaughterhouses have become sites of bitter contests among faiths and regulations. The chaotic ways of enforcing environmental and food regulations ignore one of India's biggest realities: over 70 per cent of Indians are non-vegetarian. To meet the demand for meat, animals will have to be slaughtered.

As state governments became obsessed with the closure of slaughterhouses and merged this with the issue of cow protection, the fear of self-styled cow protection vigilante groups (gau rakshaks) taking law into their hands became real. In Alwar district of Rajasthan, another state that has been supporting the closure of slaughterhouses, a dairy farmer was lynched on March 31 under the suspicion of transporting cows to slaughterhouses. The incident prompted the Supreme Court to send notices on April 7 to the Centre and six states—Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Jharkhand—to respond as to why gau rakshaks should not be banned. The notices were issued during a hearing in a case that was filed by Congress leader Tehseen Poonawalla in 2016 calling for a ban on cow vigilante groups.

Read More: <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/coverage/meat-matters-57633>.

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Opinions/Books

Are People Losing Faith in the Courts?

(Alok Prasanna Kumar, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 22 April, 2017)

Contrary to popular belief, there is no litigation explosion. The data from the courts themselves suggests that fewer civil cases are being filed while criminal cases have been steadily increasing. This suggests that litigants are approaching the courts in fewer numbers, and may be resorting to other methods to resolve disputes. It may also be possible that the increase in criminal litigation could be attributed to the use of criminal law to resolve civil disputes.

Read More: <http://www.epw.in/journal/2017/16/law-and-society/are-people-losing-faith-inthe-courts.html>.

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