

**DAILY
CURRENT
AFFAIRS
ANALYSIS**



LAKSHYA ACADEMY®

17 APRIL 2024

1 - India's Advancement in Parity Among Genders:

GS I

Women Empowerment

- **Context:**

- The UNDP has published the Gender Inequality Index (GII), 2022 in their Human Development Report 2023–2024.
- India has a GII score of 0.437, placing it 108th out of 193 nations.

- **What is the Index of Gender Inequality?**

- Using three dimensions—reproductive health, empowerment, and the labour market—GII is a composite measure of gender inequality.
- It illustrates the disparity between the potential for human development between male and female accomplishments in these domains.
- From 0 (equality) to 1 (severe inequality), GII values are available.
- Low gender inequality is indicated by a low GII number and vice versa.

- **Measurements and Pointers:**

- **India's Development:**

- India had a score of 0.490 on the Gender Inequality Index 2021, placing it at number 122 out of 191 nations.
- Based on available data, there has been a notable increase of 14 rankings on GII 2022 compared to GII 2021.
- India's GII ranking has improved steadily over the past ten years, suggesting that the nation is making progress towards achieving gender equality.
- **Maternal Mortality Ratio:** The number of deaths per 100,000 live births that are caused by pregnancy-related factors.
- The annual number of births to females aged 10–14 or 15–19 per 1,000 females in the corresponding age group is known as the adolescent birth rate.
- The percentage of the working-age population (those who are 15 years of age and older) that is either employed or actively seeking employment is known as the labour force participation rate.

● **Which are India's Principal Concerns Regarding Gender Inequality?**

- **Gender-Based Violence:** In India, women and girls frequently experience rape, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, violence tied to dowries, and honour killings.
- These problems have a major impact on the state of gender disparity.
- As to the findings of the National Family Health Survey-5, over thirty percent of Indian women had been victims of physical or sexual violence.
- **Unequal Access to Education:** In terms of enrollment, retention, and completion rates, there are still differences between boys and girls despite efforts to increase access to education.
- Ethnic prejudices, financial limitations, and security issues frequently prevent girls from attending school.
- **Invisible Labour:** Indian women frequently undertake a large amount of unpaid caregiving, such as housework, childrearing, and eldercare. This job is frequently disregarded and underestimated, which adds to their time and financial impoverishment.
- **Gender Wage difference:** There is a sizable gender wage difference in India, with women typically earning less than men for equivalent labour.
- This disparity is pervasive in a range of industries and employment levels.
- The World Inequality Report 2022 indicates that in India, men make up 82% of the work income while women make up 18%.
- **Child Marriage:** Girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage, which exposes them to health dangers as well as economic and educational prospects.
- UNESCO estimates that India is home to one in three child brides worldwide.
- Child brides are ladies of various ages who were married for the first time as well as girls under the age of eighteen who are already married.
- Between 2006 and 2019, the percentage of child marriages has decreased by half, from 47% to 23.3% (NFHS-5).
- Child marriage is more common than the national average in a few states, including Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura, and West Bengal.
- What gender equality-promoting initiatives is the Indian government working on?
- The organisation Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) guarantees the education, survival, and safety of girls.
- Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) seeks to provide rural women with work opportunities and skill development.
- Women can pursue work opportunities by providing safe surroundings for their children through the National Creche Scheme.
- Pregnant and nursing moms can receive maternity benefits through the Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandna Yojna.
- Awas Yojana Pradhan Mantri guarantees houses under women's names.
- Through bank accounts, Sukanya Samridhi Yojna (SSY) gives girls economic empowerment.
- Since 2005, the Indian Union Budget has included a gender budget, which allocates funds to activities and initiatives specifically for women.

- The Nirbhaya Fund Framework enables the implementation of programmes targeted at improving the safety and security of women in the nation by providing a non-lapsable corpus fund.
 - One Stop Centres (OSCs) provide comprehensive services, including as therapy, legal support, and medical attention, to women who have been the victims of violence.
 - One-third of all seats in the Lok Sabha, State legislative assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi are set aside for women by the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, including those designated for SCs and STs.
 - In Panchayati Raj Institutions, women are already allocated 33% of the seats.
 - In order to balance the gender ratio throughout the streams, the Vigyan Jyoti initiative strives to encourage girls to pursue higher education and professions in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), especially in the fields where women's participation is low.
 - Other programmes that support female entrepreneurs include Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Mahila e-Haat, Stand-Up India, and the Entrepreneurship and Skill Development Programme (ESSDP).
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- Every year, the Global Gender Gap Index compares the status of gender parity in four important areas: political empowerment, health and survival, educational attainment, and economic participation and opportunity.
 - Since it was first created in 2006, this index has been the longest running, tracking advancements made over time to close these disparities.
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- **The Way Ahead:**
 - Enforcing and strengthening current laws pertaining to child marriage, job discrimination, and gender-based violence are examples of comprehensive legal reforms.
 - Including provisions in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita concerning marital rape in accordance with the Justice Verma Committee's recommendations (2013).
 - Gender-Sensitive Education: To advance gender equality, dispel misconceptions, and guarantee that girls have equal access to high-quality education, schools and institutions should adopt gender-sensitive curricula and policies.
 - Platforms for Freelancing: Encouraging and making accessible internet marketplaces and platforms for freelancing, where housewives can list their services and abilities in social media management, graphic design, content writing, virtual help, and online tuition.
 - Support for Unpaid Care labour: It's important to encourage shared duties among family members and acknowledge the unpaid care labour that women conduct. Promote men's participation in household and caregiving duties.
 - Equal Pay and Workplace standards: Putting in place workplace rules that encourage work-life balance and safe, harassment- and discrimination-free work environments; encouraging gender diversity in leadership roles; and enforcing equal pay for equal work standards.

2 - S. Union of India v. R. Bommai Case 1994:

GS II

Judiciary related issues

- **Context:**

- Article 356 prohibits the dismissal of state governments arbitrarily, as per the ruling in the 1994 Supreme Court of India case S. R. Bommai v. Union of India, which was decided by a nine-judge court. As it marks its 30th anniversary, its influence on the constitution of India continues to grow.

- **The case of R. Bommai v. Union of India:**

- Following its victory in the Karnataka Assembly elections in 1985, the Janata Party formed a government led by Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde. Later, in 1988, Hegde was replaced by SR Bommai.
- Together with nineteen other Legislative Assembly members, a Janata Dal politician left the party in September 1988, ending their support for the Bommai administration.
- Article 356 was used to overthrow the state government as a result of the majority loss from defections. The governor refused Bommai's request to test the majority.
- Bommai appealed to the Supreme Court after the high court denied his request for redress.

- **The Supreme Court's ruling:**

- The Sarkaria Commission and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar both urged caution in the use of the Presidential Proclamation under Article 356, and a nine-judge Supreme Court bench highlighted this point.
- According to Article 356(3), the Presidential Proclamation must be carefully examined by both houses of Parliament.
- The proclamation expires after two months if it is issued without the consent of both houses, at which point the state assembly reconvenes.
- If the proclamation raises debatable issues, the Supreme Court may consider writ petitions contesting its validity in addition to subjecting it to judicial review.
- made it clear that there are restrictions on the President's ability to remove a state government.
- acknowledged that although the dissolution of the legislature is not specifically addressed in Article 356, such powers might be deduced from it.
- It was noted that the authority to dissolve the legislature is implied by Article 174(2), which gives the Governor the authority to dissolve the Legislative Assembly, and Article 356(1)(a), which

gives the President the authority to bestow upon himself the powers of the Governor and the state government.

- **Relevance of S.R. Case of Bommai v. Union of India:**

- The S.R. Bommai case documents the abuse of article 356 and provides one of the Supreme Court's seminal rulings on the basic structure doctrine.
- The ruling clarified the use and constraints of Article 356 and emphasised that it should only be used in extreme situations.
- The Sarkaria Commission's recommendations aligned with the principles established by the Supreme Court.
- The case supported cooperative federalism and upheld the fundamentals of federalism, declaring that state governments are not subservient to the federal government.
- The ruling affirmed the judiciary's responsibility to scrutinise the President's acts in accordance with Article 356 in order to ensure that constitutional values are upheld and to prevent the abuse of power.
- It reaffirmed that the only place to test the majority of the government is on the Assembly floor, not the governor's personal judgement.
- In several cases, the Sarkaria Commission recommended informing the state prior to triggering Article 356(1).
- It said that before using Article 365, all other possibilities for solving the issue should be explored. Article 365 should only be used in the event that no other feasible solution exists.

- **Federalism that is competitive and cooperative:**

- Under cooperative federalism, the federal government and the states have a horizontal relationship in which they "cooperate" for the greater good of society.
- It is a crucial instrument that permits states to take part in the creation and execution of national policy.
- According to the Constitution, collaboration between the Union and the states is required on the issues listed in Schedule VII.
- Under competitive federalism, there is a vertical relationship between the federal government and the states, and a horizontal one between the states.
- States operating under competitive federalism must contend for advantages both with the centre and among themselves.
- States vie with one another to draw capital and investments, which boosts development efforts and administrative efficiency.

- **What does the Indian Constitution's Article 356 mean?**
- **The history of Article 356:**
 - The Constituent Assembly debated whether to adopt a federal or unitary governance system for India during its initial deliberations.
 - There arose two schools of thought: those who supported federalism argued for dispersed authority, while others supported a more centralised unitary state.
 - Dr. Ambedkar made it clear that both federal and unitary principles govern Indian operations, with federalism predominating in everyday situations and unitary management in times of emergency.
 - Subsequent governments often used Article 356 for political purposes in spite of warnings against its misuse, leading to its 132 instances of invocation.
- **Section 356:**
 - Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 serves as the foundation for Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.
 - Article 356 states that any state in India may be subject to President's Rule in the event that the constitutional machinery malfunctions.
 - Both when a state disobeys Union government directives (Article 365) and when the President receives a report from the state governor or is otherwise persuaded that the state government cannot operate in accordance with the Constitution may result in the imposition of President's Rule.
 - During the President's Rule, the state government is suspended, and the central government directly administers the state through the Governor.
 - Parliamentary approval is necessary for imposing the President's Rule, and it should be approved in both Houses of Parliament within two months through a simple majority.
 - Initially, the President's Rule is for six months and can be extended for up to three years with parliamentary approval every six months.
 - The 44th Amendment to the Constitution (1978) introduced constraints on extending the President's Rule beyond one year, allowing extension only in case of a national emergency or if the Election Commission certifies the necessity due to difficulties in conducting state assembly elections.
 - Based on the report of the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-state Relations (1988), the Supreme Court in the Bommai case, 1994, enlisted the situations where the exercise of power under Article 356 could be proper or improper.

Source → The Hindu

3 - Forest Fires:

GS III

Environmental Conservation

- **Context:**

- Recently, Forest Fires have been raging in the Coonoor forest range in the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu.
- The Indian Air Force joined the ongoing firefighting efforts of the state forest department, deploying a Mi-17 V5 helicopter to conduct multiple “Bambi Bucket” operations.
- The Bambi Bucket, also called a helicopter bucket or a helibucket, is a specialised container that is suspended by cable under a chopper, and which can be filled by lowering into a river or pond before being flown above a fire and discharged aerially by opening a valve at the bottom of the bucket.
- The Bambi Bucket is especially helpful in fighting wildfires that are difficult or impossible to reach from the ground. Around the world, helicopters are frequently commissioned to fight forest fires.

- **What is a Forest Fire?**

- It is also known as a bush fire, vegetation fire, wildfire, or any other uncontrolled, unplanned burning of plants in a natural environment, such as a forest, grassland, brushland, or tundra. It spreads according to the wind and topography and consumes the natural fuels.
- A wildfire requires three essential elements to sustain combustion like Fuel, Oxygen, and a Heat source.

- **Classification:**

- **Surface Fire:** A forest fire may burn primarily as a surface fire, spreading along the ground as the surface litter (senescent leaves and twigs and dry grasses etc) on the forest floor and is engulfed by the spreading flames.
- **Underground Fire/Zombie Fire:** The fires of low intensity, consuming the organic matter beneath and the surface litter of the forest floor are sub-grouped as underground fires. In most of the dense forests, a thick mantle of organic matter is found on top of the mineral soil.
- These fires usually spread entirely underground and burn for some meters below the surface.
- This fire spreads very slowly and in most cases it becomes very hard to detect and control such types of fires.

- They may continue to burn for months and destroy the vegetative cover of the soil.
- **Canopy or Crown Fires:** These occur when fire spreads through the upper canopy of trees, often fueled by high winds and dry conditions. They can be particularly intense and difficult to control.
- **Controlled Deliberate Fires:** In some cases, controlled deliberate fires, also known as prescribed burns or bushfires, are intentionally set by forest management agencies to reduce fuel loads, mitigate the risk of uncontrolled wildfires, and promote ecosystem health.
- These controlled burns are carefully planned and executed under specific conditions to minimize risks and maximize benefits to the forest ecosystem.

- **Government Initiatives:**

- National Action Plan for Forest Fires (NAPFF), was started in 2018 with the goal of reducing forest fires by informing, enabling, and empowering forest fringe communities and incentivizing them to collaborate with state forest departments.
- The Forest Fire Prevention and Management Scheme (FPM) is the only government-sponsored programme dedicated to assisting states in dealing with forest fires.

- **How Common are Forest Fires in India?**

- **Forest Fire Season:**

- November to June is considered to be forest fire season in India, with hundreds of thousands of small and large fires burning every year, especially from February onward as summer approaches.
- April-May are usually the worst fire months across the country.
- The biennial India State of Forest Report (ISFR) published by the Forest Survey of India (FSI) in its 2021 report, shows that the total Fire-prone forest area is 35.47% of the forest cover.

- **Regions:**

- Severe fires break out in dry deciduous forests, while evergreen, semi-evergreen, and montane temperate forests are comparatively less prone to fires.
- The forests of Northeast India, Odisha, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand are the most vulnerable to fires during the November to June period.
- In 2021, a series of forest fires broke out in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland-Manipur border, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, including in wildlife sanctuaries.

- **Present Scenario (2024):**

- The highest number of forest fires have been reported from Mizoram (3,738), Manipur (1,702), Assam (1,652), Meghalaya (1,252), and Maharashtra (1,215), as per FSI data.

- Satellite data of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) tools, showed that forest fires have been on an uptick since early March 2024 along the Konkan belt in Maharashtra, south-coastal Gujarat along Gir Somnath and Porbandar, southern Rajasthan and adjoining south-western districts of Madhya Pradesh, coastal and interior Odisha, and adjoining Jharkhand.
- In South India, most forest-covered areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have seen fire incidents over the past week.

- **What is the Reason for the Forest Fires?**

- **Human Carelessness:**

- A majority of forest fires are caused by human activities such as discarded cigarettes, campfires, burning of debris, and other similar processes.
- With increasing urbanisation and human presence in forested areas, the risk of accidental fires also increases.
- Usually, poachers and illegal smugglers set fires either to divert the attention of forest officials or to eliminate evidence of their crimes.

- **Weather Conditions:**

- The exceptionally hot and dry weather conditions experienced in southern India, particularly during the early phase of the summer season, have created a conducive environment for the spread of forest fires.
- High temperatures, low humidity, and calm winds increase the likelihood of fires igniting and spreading rapidly.

- **Aridity:**

- Southern India has experienced above-normal temperatures, clear sky conditions, and a lack of rainfall, leading to increased aridity.
- This dries out vegetation, making it more susceptible to ignition and facilitating the rapid spread of fires.

- **Early Availability of Dry Biomass:**

- The above-normal temperatures experienced in the months leading up to the summer season have resulted in an early availability of dry biomass in forests.
- This dry vegetation, including the leaves of chir forests, is particularly prone to igniting and spreading fires.

- The high flammability of chir forest leaves raises the chances of forest fires and adds to their intensity and rapid spread.
- **What can be Done to Mitigate Forest Fire?**
- **Public Awareness and Education:**
 - Educating the public about the causes and consequences of forest fires, as well as promoting responsible behaviour in forests, can help reduce the incidence of human-caused fires.
 - Campaigns on fire safety, proper disposal of cigarettes, and the dangers of leaving campfires unattended can raise awareness and encourage responsible behaviour.
- **Strict Enforcement of Regulations:**
 - Enforcing laws and regulations related to forest fire prevention, such as restrictions on burning debris and campfire bans during dry periods, can help reduce the risk of accidental fires.
 - Penalties for violating fire safety regulations should be strictly enforced to deter irresponsible behaviour.
- **Firebreaks and Fuel Management:**
 - Creating firebreaks and conducting controlled burns to remove excess vegetation can help reduce the spread of fires by creating barriers and reducing fuel loads.
 - Proper fuel management practices, such as thinning dense vegetation and clearing deadwood, can also make forests more resilient to fires.
- **Early Detection Systems:**
 - Implementing early detection systems, such as surveillance cameras, satellite monitoring, and lookout towers, can help detect fires in their early stages when they are easier to contain.
 - Rapid detection allows for a quicker response, minimizing the size and impact of fires.

Source → The Hindu

4 - Boosting Exports from MSMEs:

GS III

Indian Economy

- **Context:**
- Recently, the NITI Aayog released a report titled Boosting Exports from MSMEs, which recommends that the government must make it easier for smaller firms to export their goods through e-commerce platforms.
- Niti Aayog recommends the creation of a single information portal for exporters, leveraging AI-based interfaces to provide comprehensive and up-to-date information on market tariffs, paperwork requirements, finance sources, service providers, incentives, and potential customers.
- It recommended establishing a comprehensive National Trade Portal (NTN) to streamline the export process for MSMEs, facilitating seamless operations and competitive advantage.
- **Annual Financial Reconciliation Process:**
- The report suggests introducing an annual financial reconciliation process for e-commerce exporters and exemptions on import duties for rejects or returns. It also proposes creating a green channel clearance for e-commerce exports.
- **Distinction Between Exporter on Record (EOR) and Seller on Record (SOR):**
- To boost e-commerce exports, the report suggests distinguishing between EOR and SOR and allowing a reduction in invoice value without a percentage ceiling for all e-commerce exports.
- EOR refers to the party or entity that is officially recognised as the exporter of goods in an international transaction. The EOR is responsible for complying with all export regulations, documentation, and customs requirements of the exporting country.
- SOR refers to the party or entity that is legally recognised as the seller in a commercial transaction. The SOR is responsible for selling the goods to the buyer and may handle tasks such as negotiating the terms of sale, preparing invoices, arranging for shipping and delivery, and ensuring that the goods meet the agreed-upon specifications.
- **Promotion of Export Credit Guarantee:**
- Access to finance is highlighted as a significant bottleneck for MSMEs. The report recommends promoting the Export Credit Guarantee to improve working capital availability, suggesting that

the government create an incentive package to increase uptake from the current 10% to 50% or more.

- **Easing Merchandise Exports for MSMEs:**

- Suggestions include the relaxation of compliance requirements for MSMEs for a limited period and implementing a time-bound disbursement process for incentives to prevent the blocking of working capital.

- **Identification of Export Opportunities in Specific Sectors:**

- The report identifies various sectors where Indian MSMEs can compete in export markets, such as handicrafts, handloom textiles, ayurveda, herbal supplements, leather goods, imitation jewellery, and wooden products. It emphasises the substantial global market potential exceeding USD 340 billion for these sectors.

- **What is the Current Scenario of the MSME Sector in India?**

- **MSME Contribution to the Economy:**

- The report highlights the significant contribution of MSMEs to India's economy
- , accounting for over 11 crore jobs and around 27% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product).

- **Rapid Growth in MSME Establishment:**

- Between the financial year (FY) 2019 and FY 2021, India saw a significant increase in the establishment of new MSME units, with around 40 lakh new MSMEs being established. This growth is particularly notable in micro-enterprises.
- Currently, around 38% of the total 54 lakh MSME units are engaged in manufacturing, with small and medium enterprises largely contributing to manufacturing activity suitable for export.
- The top five states with the highest concentration of manufacturing MSMEs are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Gujarat.

- **Export Potential:**

- Exporting is crucial for Indian MSMEs to unlock growth potential. However, India's share of global exports of low-skilled manufacturing products is only 5%, despite having a large working-age population and significant employment in manufacturing MSMEs.
- Despite the potential for exporting, only a small percentage of MSMEs engage in it, with many having annual turnover from exports of less than Rs 1 crore.

- **What is MSME?**

- MSMEs form the backbone of the Indian economy, contributing significantly to employment generation, industrial production, and overall economic growth.
- These enterprises are engaged in the production, manufacturing, processing, or preservation of goods and commodities.
- They account for 38.4% of the total manufacturing output and contribute 45.03% of the country's total exports.

- **What are the Current Challenges Related to the MSME Sector in India?**

- **Financial Constraint:**

- In the Indian economy, access to finance has always been an issue for smaller firms and businesses. This is a major hindrance for businesses as well as the MSME sector.
- However, the most disturbing fact about it is that only 16% of SMEs get access to timely finance, resulting in small and medium firms being forced to rely on their resources.

- **Lack of Innovation:**

- Indian MSMEs lack innovation, and the majority of the products that they produce are based on outdated technologies. There is a severe lack of entrepreneurs in this sector, which has prevented it from adopting new technologies and tools.
- Consequently, MSMEs have faced challenges stemming from outdated technology and lower productivity levels, particularly in comparison to larger firms.

- **Majority of Small Firms:**

- Micro and small businesses account for more than 80% of MSMEs. Therefore, due to communication gaps and awareness, they cannot take advantage of the government's emergency line of credit, stressed asset relief, equity participation, and fund of funds operation.

- **Lack of Formalisation amongst MSMEs:**

- MSMEs lack formalisation and this contributes to the credit gap.
- Almost 86% of manufacturing MSMEs in the country are unregistered. Even today, only about 1.1 crore MSMEs are registered with the Goods and Services Tax.

- **What are the Government Initiatives Related to MSMEs?**

- Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme
- Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro & Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

- Interest Subsidy Eligibility Certificate (ISEC)
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)
- Credit Linked Capital Subsidy for Technology Upgradation (CLCSS)
- Zero Defect & Zero Effect (ZED)

- **Conclusion:**

- While the MSME sector in India is vital for employment generation and economic growth, there are challenges such as limited export participation and regulatory constraints that need to be addressed to unlock its full potential.

Source → The Hindu



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