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## India's 2024 Global Hunger Index ranking

(The Hindu, 17-10-24)

**Context:** Despite being the world's fastest-growing economy (6.8% growth in FY24) with a GDP of nearly \$4 trillion (5th globally), India's nutrition outcomes remain poor.

### What is the Global Hunger Index, and what determines its ranking?

- The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at global, regional, and national levels.
- It's published annually by Irish humanitarian organisation Concern Worldwide and German aid agency Welthungerhilfe
- The GHI score is determined by four key indicators:
  - Undernourishment: The proportion of the population with insufficient caloric intake.
  - Child wasting: The proportion of children under five who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition.
  - Child stunting: The proportion of children under five who have low height for their age, indicating chronic undernutrition.
  - Child mortality: The mortality rate of children under five.
- The GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale, where 0 is the best score (no hunger) and 100 is the worst.
- Globally, around 733 million people face hunger each day due to a lack of access to a sufficient amount of food, while about 2.8 billion people cannot afford a healthy diet

### How does India fare on the different parameters in GHI?

- India's 2024 Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranking is 105th out of 127 countries.
- With a score of 27.3 in the 2024 Global Hunger Index, India has a level of hunger that is serious.
- India is among 42 countries that fall within the "serious" category, alongside Pakistan and Afghanistan.
  - Other South Asian neighbours such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka showing better GHI scores to be listed under the "moderate" category.
- India's GHI Score is based on the values of four component indicators:
  - 13.7% of the population is undernourished
  - 35.5% of children under five are stunted (This is often caused by inadequate food intake, poor dietary diversity, and frequent infections)
  - 18.7% of children under five are wasted (This can be due to food insecurity, poor sanitation, and inadequate access to healthcare)
  - 2.9% of children die before their fifth birthday
- The report states that India has demonstrated "significant political will" to transform the food and nutrition landscape — pointing to the
  - National Food Security Act
  - Poshan Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission)
  - PM Garib Kalyan Yojna (PMGKAY)
  - National Mission for Natural Farming

### Why does India fare poorly in GHI rankings?

- Poverty and Unequal distribution of wealth means many families can't afford nutritious food.
  - The per capita income of \$2,485 in FY24 is less than a quarter of the global average (\$13,920 in FY22), highlighting severe income inequality.
- **Poor access to healthcare**, especially in rural areas, hinders the prevention and treatment of undernutrition and related illnesses
- Many Indian diets are **cereal-heavy** and lack diverse nutrients.
- Lack of access to clean water and **proper sanitation facilities** contributes to frequent infections. This leads to a cycle of malnutrition and illness, particularly affecting children.
  - Only 36% of households disposed of children's stools in a safe manner. One in 10 children under the age of five suffer from diarrhoea.
- In some households, **women and girls eat last and least**. This affects maternal nutrition and consequently child health.
- **Early marriage and pregnancy** with high adolescent pregnancies → Young mothers are often not physically or nutritionally prepared for childbearing.
- **Food inflation** more than doubled from 3.8% in FY22 to 7.5% in FY24, disproportionately affecting the poor.
- Growing **threat of climate change** to India's food security → disproportionately impacts the poor's ability to access nutritious food.
- **Issues in food distribution and access** despite highest levels of food production (332 million tonnes in 2023-24), with bumper crops in rice and wheat.
- **Implementation gap in nutrition schemes** → Corruption and leakages in the public distribution system affect food security.

### What is the debate about data collection methodology?

- Government's perspective:
  - The Ministry of Women and Child Development believes their 'Poshan Tracker' app should be used for data.
  - They claim this tracker shows much lower rates of child wasting (below 7.2%) than the GHI report (18.7%).
  - The Ministry argues that international organizations like UNICEF and WHO have even praised this tracker but has not relied on it for ranking purpose.
- GHI researchers' stance:
  - They use data from internationally recognized surveys for consistency across countries.
  - This approach ensures all countries are measured using the same methods, making rankings fair and comparable.
  - They argue that using different data sources for different countries would make the results less reliable and therefore, they can't make an exception to India.

### What is the way forward so that India improves its GHI ranking?

- **improved access to safety nets and cash transfers**. These involve improving access to programs such as the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS), PMGKAY and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- **Investments in agriculture** and a holistic food systems approach which promotes diversified, nutritious and ecological food production including nutri-cereals such as millets.

- **Improving access to nutritious food:** Strengthening public distribution systems, promoting diversified agriculture, and supporting smallholder farmers.
- **Investing in health and nutrition:** Expanding access to healthcare, promoting breastfeeding, and providing micronutrient supplements.
- **Improving sanitation and hygiene:** Promoting safe sanitation practices, providing access to clean water, and improving hygiene education.
- **Empowering women:** Promoting gender equality and empowering women through education and economic opportunities.
- **Addressing poverty and inequality:** Implementing social protection programs and promoting inclusive economic growth

*Can you answer the following question?*

*Critically analyze India's performance in the Global Hunger Index. What are the key factors contributing to its consistently low ranking despite economic growth? Suggest a multi-pronged strategy to address the challenge of hunger and malnutrition in India*

## Samsung Workers Protest 2024

(The Hindu - 17-10-24)

**Context:** The labor strike at Samsung's Sriperumbudur plant in India, highlights the tensions between workers' rights and corporate interests in the country's manufacturing sector

- After a month-long standoff, the strike ended with a partial resolution. Samsung agreed to some concessions on wages and benefits, but the **issue of union recognition remains unresolved**

### What were the main issues behind the Samsung India protests?

- **Union recognition:** Workers demanded formal recognition of their union (SIWU)
- **Working conditions:** Allegations of harsh conditions, long hours, and inadequate breaks
- **Wage concerns:** Workers argued for fair compensation and wage negotiation through a recognized union

### How do East Asian firms view unions?

- Some notable workers' protests in different parts of India have been at manufacturing facilities with East Asian capital — Honda Scooters and Motorcycles in 2005, Maruti Suzuki in 2011-12, Wistron in 2020 and Foxconn in 2021.
- Forming a workers' union in a foreign-owned enterprise in India is a challenge in itself with vehement opposition from the management.
- Labour subordination and disciplining has remained the default setting of most East Asian companies operating in India, especially in the past two decades.
- The stressful working conditions in these factories are shaped and determined by their management philosophy, which largely draws inspiration from the Japanese production method called Kaizen — that is, continuous improvement **to increase work intensity** and reduce idle time.

- Over the years, through offshore supply chains, global manufacturing in the electronics industry has been **reordered into just-in-time production** — a system in which products are created to meet demand rather than in surplus or in advance of need.
- As companies adopt this model to increase efficiency, the output is ramped up ahead of product launches and peak sales periods. It leads to punishing work ethic, regimented culture of rules and unyielding deadlines.
- It is in this context that there is demand for worker unions. However, past experiences — the ready reference being Maruti Suzuki workers' struggles to form a union — reflect the reluctance of managements.

### **Why is the Samsung labor dispute significant?**

- One of the largest labor disputes in India's recent history
- Challenges Prime Minister Modi's "Make in India" initiative -> deters foreign investment
- Reflects growing assertiveness of labor in India
- Could impact labor relations in the electronics industry and beyond
- May encourage workers in other sectors to organize and demand better rights
- Impacts a crucial Samsung facility, affecting production

### **What is the way ahead?**

- **Proactive Government Intervention:** The Tamil Nadu government played a key role in mediating the dispute, highlighting the need for proactive government intervention in such situation
- **Strengthening Labor Laws:** There is a need to strengthen labor laws and enforcement mechanisms to ensure fair treatment of workers and promote healthy industrial relations
- **Promoting Social Dialogue:** Encouraging social dialogue between employers, workers, and the government is essential for resolving labor disputes and creating a harmonious work environment
- **Balancing Interests:** Finding a balance between attracting foreign investment and protecting labor rights will be crucial for India's continued economic growth

*Can you answer the following question?*

*"The recent labor strikes in the Indian manufacturing sector, particularly in the electronics industry, highlight the growing tension between attracting foreign investment and ensuring workers' rights." Analyze this statement in the context of India's economic development goals.*