



20 March, 2024

Gender Pay Gap

Context: A report from the World Bank Group, *Women, Business and Law 2024*, revealed that women globally earn only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men.

➤ Calculation Method:

- The gender pay gap is the difference between the average wage levels of all working women and men, not just a comparison of individuals in the same roles.
- It differs from "equal pay for equal work," which advocates for equal pay when qualifications and job responsibilities are identical.

➤ Calculation Variations:

- Different studies use various methodologies, such as hourly or weekly wages, leading to slight discrepancies in reported figures.

➤ Factors Contributing to the Gap:

- **Labor Force Participation:** Women's lower participation rate in paid jobs due to societal gender roles contributes to the gap.
- **Occupational Segregation:** Women are often concentrated in lower-paying industries and roles.
- **Managerial Positions:** Fewer women hold leadership positions, especially in strategic roles, affecting the overall average salary.
- **Industry Disparities:** Certain industries dominated by men tend to offer higher remuneration than those where women are predominant.
- **Part-Time Employment:** Women disproportionately engage in part-time work, which often lacks proportional benefits compared to full-time roles.

➤ Socio-Economic Influences:

- Cultural beliefs regarding men as primary breadwinners and historical underinvestment in women's education contribute to the gap.
- Safety concerns in commuting and workplace environments also influence women's career choices.

➤ Insights from Employment Data:

- Patterns emerge in earnings concerning age and career breaks, particularly for women in their mid-30s and 40s.
- The "motherhood penalty" underscores how career interruptions for child-rearing disproportionately affect women's earnings potential.

➤ Expert Insights:

- Economist Claudia Goldin highlights the trade-offs between family and career advancement, noting the structural challenges that perpetuate the gap.
- Policy interventions such as maternity and paternity leave and flexible work arrangements can influence the pace of gap closure.

➤ Long-term Outlook:

- Closing the gender pay gap remains a gradual process, influenced by evolving societal norms and policy interventions.

- Despite progress, substantial disparities persist, necessitating ongoing efforts to achieve pay equality.

India - Scores for Women, Business and the Law 2024

Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension	WBI 2024 Index Score
100	100	25	100	40	75	80	75	74.4

World Air Quality Report 2023

Context: Delhi has been adjudged as the most polluted capital city in 2023.

➤ PM 2.5 Levels in Delhi:

- Delhi ranked as the most polluted capital city globally in 2023, with PM 2.5 levels significantly exceeding WHO guidelines.
- The average annual PM 2.5 concentration in Delhi was $92.7 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, far above the recommended limit of $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Dhaka in Bangladesh followed Delhi, with a PM 2.5 level of $80.2 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, indicating widespread air pollution across various urban centers.

➤ Most Polluted Cities:

- Bhiwadi in Rajasthan topped the list as the most polluted city in India and the third most polluted city globally, with PM levels reaching $92.7 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.
- Delhi emerged as the most polluted metropolitan city, with PM levels at $92.6 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, nearly 20 times higher than the safe limit. It ranked fourth among 50 cities evaluated.

➤ Other Cities on the List

- Several cities dominated the list of most polluted cities, including Patna, Muzaffarnagar, Darbhanga, Noida, Gurgaon, Bulandshahr, Meerut, Charkhi Dadri, Jind, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Dadri, Hisar, and Greater Noida.

➤ Changes in Pollution Levels:

- Delhi's neighboring towns of Gurugram, Noida, Ghaziabad, and Faridabad experienced a slight decline in pollution levels. The reduction ranged from 34% in Gurugram to 21% in Faridabad compared to previous years' average PM 2.5 levels.

➤ India's Global Ranking:

- Among 131 countries, India ranked eighth, with a population-weighted average PM2.5 level of $53.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2022.
- This ranking placed India behind Chad, Iraq, Pakistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, and Kuwait in terms of air pollution levels.
- The country's annual average PM2.5 level slightly decreased from $58.1 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2021 to $53.3 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2022.

➤ Worsening Trends:

- Delhi's air quality deteriorated from 2022 to 2023, with a 10% increase in average annual PM 2.5 concentration.

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- November was the most polluted month in 2023, with a PM 2.5 level soaring to 255.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, highlighting seasonal variations and peak pollution periods.

➤ **Regional Disparities:**

- Within India, cities like Begusarai and Guwahati surpassed Delhi in terms of PM 2.5 levels, indicating the broader challenge of air pollution across various regions.

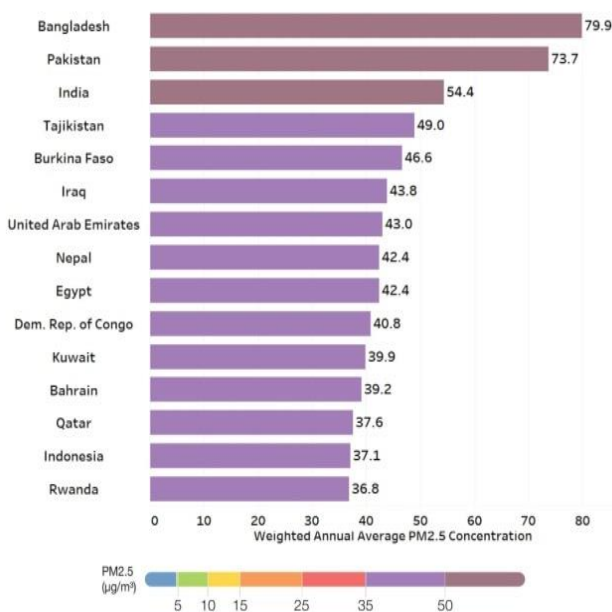
➤ **National and Global Rankings:**

- India ranked third globally for PM 2.5 levels, with an average annual concentration of 54.4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, trailing behind Bangladesh and Pakistan.
- The report emphasized the widespread impact of air pollution in India, with a significant portion of the population experiencing PM 2.5 levels well above WHO guidelines.

➤ **Implications for Health:**

- Exposure to PM 2.5 particles has direct links to various health issues, including cardiovascular and neurological diseases, as well as increased mortality rates.
- The alarming statistics underscore the urgent need for mitigation measures to address the adverse health effects of air pollution.

Most Polluted Countries in the World in 2023



House terms and Poll schedules

Context: The ECI announced the election schedule for Lok Sabha and four state Assemblies and moved up the vote counting date for Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh to June 2, aligning with the expiry of both Legislative Assemblies' terms.

➤ **Original Election Schedule:**

- Assembly elections in Arunachal and Sikkim were to be notified on March 20.
- Nomination filing period: March 20 to March 27, with withdrawals allowed until March 30.
- Polling for both Assembly and Lok Sabha elections set for April 19, the first phase of polling.
- Lok Sabha elections scheduled across seven phases: April 19 and 26; May 7, 13, 20, and 26; and June 1.
- Counting for all seats in Lok Sabha and four Assemblies scheduled for June 4.

➤ **Change in Counting Date:**

- The ECI announced on March 17 that counting for Assembly seats in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim would occur on June 2 instead of June 4.
- The decision was prompted by the realization that both Legislative Assemblies' terms were set to expire on June 2, necessitating an earlier counting date to complete the election process before the Assembly terms ended.

➤ **Constitutional Framework:**

- Terms of state Assemblies and Lok Sabha last for five years from their first sitting, as outlined in Articles 172(1) and 83(2) respectively.
- Extensions during emergencies are permissible but must not exceed one year at a time and cannot extend beyond six months after the emergency ends.

➤ **Application to Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim:**

- The Assemblies of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh convened for the first time on June 3, 2019, indicating their terms would conclude on June 2, 2024.
- Counting will conclude before midnight on June 2, allowing Governors to issue notifications to constitute new Assemblies.

➤ **Factors Considered by ECI:**

- ECI factors in weather conditions, festivals, exam schedules, and logistical considerations such as polling station availability and mobilization of election personnel.
- The date of the Assembly's term expiration is a primary consideration, known years in advance, to ensure timely completion of the election process.

➤ **Previous Instances and Adjustments:**

- While rare, the ECI has previously adjusted election schedules to accommodate local events or logistical challenges.
- In 2004, Andhra Pradesh's counting was scheduled separately due to Assembly term expiration coinciding with Lok Sabha counting.
- Schedule adjustments may also occur to align with significant local events, such as changing the counting date in Mizoram to avoid a Sunday, which holds special significance for the Christian-majority population.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

National Commission for Women



Recently, the National Commission for Women (NCW) and the Railway Protection Force have signed an MoU in New Delhi to prevent and combat human trafficking.

About the National Commission for Women:

- The National Commission for Women (NCW) is a **statutory body of the Government** of India.
- It was established in January **1992** under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- The objectives of NCW encompass **reviewing constitutional and legal protections, recommending legislative changes**, facilitating grievance redressal, advising on government policy matters, and accelerating socio-economic development for women.
- It comprises a **chairperson, five members and a member secretary, all nominated by the central government.**
- The Chairperson and every Member shall **hold office for a period of three years.**
- The State Commissions for Women in various states and union territories of India share similar functions and powers with the National Commission for Women (NCW).

Valmiki Tiger Reserve



Recently, the Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) in Bihar has taken proactive steps by implementing green energy solutions to mitigate water scarcity for wildlife during the hot summer months.

About Valmiki Tiger Reserve:

- Valmiki tiger reserve is located at the **India -Nepal border** in the **West Champaran district of Bihar.**
- It is bordered by **Nepal's Royal Chitwan National Park** in the north and the **Gandak River in the west**, it encompasses Valmiki National Park and Valmiki Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Flora:** It includes rich flora like, Sal, rohini, **sihor, teak, bamboo, semal, Mandar, shisham, Jamun, Gular** and various other species.
- **Fauna:** This reserve **hosts tigers, leopards, smaller cats**, deer species, wild boar and unique birds like **Kaleej Pheasant, hill myna, paradise fly catcher, and Himalayan bulbul.**

Bugun Tribe



Recently, the Bugun tribe near Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh donated 1,470 hectares of forest land to the state forest department to protect the critically endangered Bugun Liocichla songbird.

About Bugun Tribe:

- The Buguns, formerly known as Khowa, are one of India's earliest recognized Scheduled Tribes.
- They primarily inhabit the **Singchung Sub-Division** of West Kameng District in **Arunachal Pradesh.**
- **Agriculture has been their main occupation**, supplemented by fishing, hunting, and cattle rearing.
- The Bugun tribe has a rich cultural heritage comprising **folklores, songs, dances, music** and rituals.
- Bugun language is classified as one of the **Bugunish/Ka menic languages under Kho-Bwa languages.**
- It is **considered endangered by UNESCO, with around 10,000 speakers** concentrated mainly in the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Buguns traditionally followed animistic beliefs but have been **influenced by Buddhism (Mahayana) and Hinduism**, particularly from neighboring ethnic groups like the Sherdukpen.

Bugun Liocichla Songbird:

- The Bugun Liocichla (**Liocichla bugunorum**) is a small, olive-grey babbler with a black cap that is only **20 cm long** and closely **related to the Emei Shan liocichla.**
- It is listed as **Critically Endangered** because its population is believed to be declining due to habitat loss and degradation.
- It was first **spotted in 1995** in Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary and described as a new species in **2006 by Dr. Ramana Athreya.**

The Kshipra River



Recently, a performance audit conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on the degradation of the Kshipra river in Madhya Pradesh.

About the Kshipra River:

- The Kshipra River, **also known as the Shipra**, is a river in the state of Madhya Pradesh in central India.
- The Kshipra originates in **Vindhya Range, the Kakri Bardi Hills** in Indore and flows north **across the Malwa Plateau.**
- It then **joins the Chambal River at the MP-Rajasthan boundary** in Mandsaur district, passing through the city of Ujjain.
- The **Kshipra's main tributaries** are the Khan and Gambhir River.

The Kumbh Mela:

- The Kumbh Mela is held on the banks of the **Shipra river in Ujjain.**
- The Kumbh Mela, also known as the **Ujjain Simhastha**, is a Hindu pilgrimage and festival that takes place every **12 years** at four river-bank sites: **Haridwar, Prayagraj (Allahabad) Ujjain and Nashik.**
- The festival commemorates each revolution that **Jupiter (Brihaspati) completes at these sites.**
- The Kumbh Mela is also **listed on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage**, which was established in **2008** to demonstrate cultural heritage diversity and raise awareness of its significance.

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Chrysotile Asbestos



Recently, the United States' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally enacted a comprehensive ban on all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile asbestos.

About Chrysotile Asbestos:

- Chrysotile asbestos, also known as **white asbestos**, is one of **six silicate minerals** categorized under the term "asbestos."
- It is characterized by its **fibrous structure and heat-resistant properties**.
- It is historically **utilized in industries** such as **chlor-alkali production, construction materials, automotive components, textiles** and consumer goods.
- Despite its industrial applications, chrysotile asbestos is associated with severe health risks, including **lung cancer, mesothelioma, laryngeal cancer, ovarian cancer and asbestosis**, according to the World Health Organization.
- Chrysotile asbestos used in chlor-alkali industry to make **water treatment chemicals, chlorine bleach, caustic soda**.

The Black Sea



Recently, Russia replaced its Navy chief after reports emerged that the previous naval head was sacked for failing to prevent Black Sea warships from being repeatedly lost to Ukrainian attacks.

About the Black Sea:

- The Black Sea, also known as **the Euxine Sea** is located at the southeastern tip of Europe, between Europe and Asia.
- It is a large inland sea that borders six countries including **Georgia (East), Romania (West), Ukraine (North), Russia (Northeast), Turkey (South) and Bulgaria (Southwest)**.
- It's located between eastern Europe and western Asia and is also known as the Euxine Sea. The Black Sea is **connected to the Mediterranean Sea by the Bosphorus Strait, the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles Strait**.
- It is also connected to the **Sea of Azov by the Strait of Kerch**.
- It receives freshwater inflows from the **Danube, Dniepr and Dniestr rivers**.
- It has numerous islands, with the biggest ones including **Snake Island (Ukraine), Giresun Island (Turkey) and St. Ivan Island (Bulgaria)**.
- Due to its unique geological and hydrological conditions, the **deeper waters of the Black Sea exhibit lower oxygen levels**, creating one of the **world's largest anoxic basins** with distinct environmental conditions.

Place in News

Gambia

Recently, Gambian lawmakers voted to advance a highly controversial Bill seeking to lift a ban on female genital mutilation (FGM), which has been in place since 2015.

Gambia (Capital: Banjul)

Location: The Gambia is a country in **western Africa**, situated on the Atlantic coast.

Boundaries: Gambia shares its borders with **Senegal (North, East and South) and Atlantic Ocean (West)**.

Physical Features:

- The **Gambia River** is the major river in the Gambia, flowing from Guinea through Senegal to the Atlantic Ocean.
- The Gambia has a **tropical savannah climate**.



POINTS TO PONDER

- Recently, Genetic rescue has been proposed to conserve the tiger population of which national park? – **Ranthambore National Park**
- World Air Quality Report 2023, recently seen in the news, is published by which organization? – **Swiss organisation IQAir**
- Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS), recently seen in the news, is associated with which country? – **UK**
- Mission 414 campaign, recently seen in the news, is launched in which state? – **Himachal Pradesh**
- E-crop, a crop simulation model-based device, was developed by which one of the following institutes? – **Central Tuber Crops Research Institute, Kerala**

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