

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Page 01: GS II : International Relations/ Preliminary Examination

Recently, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indian NSA Ajit Doval on the sidelines of the BRICS National Security Advisors (NSAs) meeting held in New Delhi. Following this meeting, China's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying that Beijing is ready to work with India to "enhance mutual trust and remove suspicions." This diplomatic conversation is being considered a highly significant step toward reducing tensions in the relations between the two countries since the 2020 Galwan standoff and toward the gradual normalization of bilateral ties.

Beijing says ready to work with New Delhi to enhance mutual trust and dispel doubts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

China is ready to work with India side by side to enhance "mutual trust and dispel doubts", said the spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a day after Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed willingness to take the relations forward.

"China stands ready to work with India to implement the important common understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries, continuously enhance mutual trust and dispel doubts, properly handle sensitive



Reset efforts: Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in New Delhi. PTI

issues, deepen mutually beneficial cooperation, maintain the positive momentum of China-India re-

lations, and jointly advance our respective modernisation processes," said Lin Jian, spokesperson

of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, on Wednesday.

Earlier, Xu Feihong, Chinese Ambassador to India, said that in the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister Wang Yi had said, "China and India, as the two largest developing countries" should "play an exemplary role in promoting solidarity and self-reliance among Global South countries".

'Implement consensus' Mr. Wang's meeting with Mr. Modi took place soon after the visiting delegates who participated in the BRICS National Security Advisers' (NSAs) meeting here on June 22-23, called on Mr. Modi on Tuesday.

"China will continue to support India in fulfilling its responsibilities as the BRICS rotating chair and work with India to promote solid progress in BRICS cooperation," said Ambassador Mr. Xu. He said Mr. Wang had expressed willingness to work with India "to implement the important consensus reached between the leaders of the two countries".

According to a Chinese readout of Tuesday's meeting, the Prime Minister conveyed his greetings to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang and expressed support for cooperation under the umbrella of BRICS.

Core News Analysis

1. Main Agenda and Message of the Chinese Foreign Minister's Visit

- **Implementation of Leadership Consensus:** China has stated that it wants to fully implement the consensus reached between the top leaders of both countries (PM Modi and President Xi Jinping) at global forums (such as the Kazan and Tianjin summits).
- **Leadership of the Global South:** According to Wang Yi, India and China are the world's two largest populations and developing economies. Therefore, both countries should play an exemplary role in enhancing solidarity and self-reliance in the Global South.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Support for BRICS Chairmanship:** China has expressed its full support for India's BRICS rotating chairmanship for the year 2026 and its desire to work together for tangible progress within the bloc.

2. Resumption of Dialogue Mechanisms

- **Stalled Bilateral Mechanisms:** According to Chinese Ambassador Xu Feihong, there are nearly 50 government-to-government mechanisms between India and China, most of which have been stalled since the border dispute.
- **Cooperation in Economic and Other Sectors:** China has demanded to revitalize these dialogue mechanisms in areas such as trade, finance, law enforcement, and media.
- **Special Representatives Dialogue:** Both countries are preparing to hold the 25th round of talks between 'Special Representatives' on the boundary question to prepare a roadmap for permanent peace on the border.

3. India's Stand & Strategic Perception

- **Trust Building as the First Condition:** The Indian side (especially NSA Ajit Doval) has made it clear that stable, predictable, and positive relations between the two countries are possible only when there is complete peace on the border and concrete steps are taken by both sides to build trust.
- **Proper Management of Sensitive Issues:** The Chinese side has also acknowledged that both countries should respect each other's core interests and not allow the border dispute to become an obstacle to the overall development of bilateral relations.
- **Slow but Steady Progress:** Relations have been improving since the disengagement of forces from friction points like Depsang and Demchok at the end of 2024, but even normal steps like the resumption of direct flights are taking time due to diplomatic complexities.

4. Global & Regional Implications

- **Multipolar World:** The coming together of India and China affects the balance of power in Asia and at the global level. Both countries favor multilateralism and reforms in global governance.
- **Strategic Rivalry vs Partnership:** Beijing says that the two countries should view each other as "partners rather than rivals." However, keeping in view China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region, India remains fully vigilant regarding its security and strategic autonomy.

Conclusion

China's initiative to "enhance trust and remove suspicions" is certainly a positive sign of melting the ice between the two superpowers. It is essential for India to maintain constructive engagement with China on economic and global forums (such as BRICS), but at the same time, make no compromises regarding its regional integrity and the security of its borders. Complete peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the disengagement of military forces from both countries, and transparent

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Daily News Analysis

policies can alone make these "reset" efforts long-term and sustainable. Improvement in India-China relations is highly essential not only for the development of these two countries but also for strengthening the voice of the entire Global South and for global stability.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Which of the following is considered a key prerequisite for the normalization of India-China relations?

- (a) Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- (b) Peace and stability along the border
- (c) Joint military exercises
- (d) Permanent membership in the UN Security Council

Ans: (b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "The normalization of India-China relations is possible only if peace and trust-building along the border are ensured." In light of this statement, analyze the current state of India-China relations, the challenges involved, and future prospects. (10Marks, 150Words)

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Page 04 : GS II : Indian Polity / Preliminary Examination

Recently, on the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas (24 June), a significant statement was made by senior officials of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the Indian passport is primarily a "Travel Document" and not a "Citizenship Document." This clarification came to light during a discussion related to the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in 16 states. This statement underlines the legal and diplomatic difference between documents establishing citizenship and those facilitating travel.

'Passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Indian passport is a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document", a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

The purpose of the Indian passport is to help Indians transit and travel through foreign ports and territories and it should not be compared with other documents that are used to establish citizenship rights, the official said.

Highlighting the importance of passports in connecting the Indian workforce with the global economy, MEA officials said the government will intensify mobility engagements with western na-

tions and Japan in coming months to help citizens get secure employment opportunities in these industrialised economies.

Voter list exclusion

"Passport is a travel document, not a document of citizenship and theoretically speaking that distinguishes passport from other documents. Even though while travelling abroad, passport attests to your nationality, yet it is not a document of your citizenship," a senior official said, in response to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the Indian passport could be used to challenge an exclusion from the voter list through the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that



Passport is to facilitate foreign travel. It must not be compared with documents establishing citizenship, says MEA official.

is currently under way in 16 States.

Another MEA official said that the Indian passport is issued "after a lot of due diligence and we make sure that the person who gets it is actually entitled, and we also base ourselves on documents from several government agencies like the Aadhaar, PAN

card." The second official said that the MEA will host a major event on international mobility – the Human Resource Mobility Forum to be held in New Delhi from June 30 to July 1 – that will focus on countries like Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Denmark.

Ethical migration

A large number of recruitment agencies from across the country are expected to participate in the event that will highlight ethical migration and create awareness about how to avoid unscrupulous agents that use illegal means to send Indians to conflict zones and high risk areas.

"We have to demolish the myths that one can go to Italy or Greece using un-

fair means and then send home lots of money," the official said.

Speaking on the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas, marked on June 24, the official said that 27 countries have given visa-free entry status to Indian passport holders, while 47 countries offer visas on arrival and 66 countries provide electronic-visas (e-visas) to Indian passport holders. The MEA official said that around 10% of Indian passport-holders possess an e-passport, a chip-based document.

There are 545 passport seva kendras across the country catering to the needs of the growing number of passport applicants, and this passport network now covers almost every

Lok Sabha constituency.

In addition, one-stop centres for distressed women in the Indian diaspora have been opened in the Gulf countries and Singapore, supported by the Indian community. More such centres are expected to be established in other countries.

"Team MEA reaffirms its commitment to keep making passport services delivery faster, more transparent and accessible..." External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on the occasion of Passport Seva Divas, noting that chip-enabled e-passports and the opening of new passport seva kendras (PSKs) have contributed to ease of travel, helping Indians get global job opportunities.

Core News Analysis

1. Travel Document vs. Citizenship Document

- **Theoretical and Legal Distinction:** According to the Ministry of External Affairs official, even though a passport certifies your nationality during foreign travel, it cannot be placed on par with other documents that establish citizenship rights (such as a Voter ID card). Its primary purpose is to facilitate transit and travel through foreign ports and territories.
- **In the Context of the Electoral Roll Dispute:** This statement came in response to the question of whether individuals excluded from the electoral rolls could use the passport as incontrovertible evidence to prove their citizenship and get included in the list. The MEA clarified that technically, this is not a direct claim to citizenship.
- **Verification Process:** However, very intense due diligence is conducted before issuing a passport. For this, the government relies on documents issued by other agencies, such as PAN cards and other identity proofs.

2. International Mobility & Ethical Migration

- **Integration with the Global Economy:** The MEA's goal is to connect the Indian workforce with the global economy. For this, mobility engagements with Western nations and Japan will be accelerated in the coming months.

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Daily News Analysis

- **HR Mobility Forum (Human Resource Mobility Forum):** This major event is being organized in New Delhi from June 30 to July 1. It will primarily focus on countries like Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Denmark.
- **Ethical Migration:** The objective of this forum is to eliminate illegal and unethical methods of migration. The government wants to raise awareness against fraudulent agents who send Indians to conflict zones or high-risk areas through illegal means.

3. Modernization and Infrastructure of Passport Services

- **Introduction of e-Passports:** Currently, approximately 10% of Indian passport holders possess chip-based e-passports. According to External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, these advanced passports have made it even easier for Indians to travel and find global employment opportunities.
- **Widespread Network:** There are 545 Passport Seva Kendras (PSK) functioning across the country, covering almost every Lok Sabha constituency. The objective is to make services more transparent, rapid, and accessible.
- **Support for the Indian Diaspora:** 'One-Stop Centres' have been opened for distressed Indian women in Gulf Countries and Singapore, which also receive support from the Indian community. More such centers will be established in the future.

4. Global Ranking and Access of Indian Passport

- **Visa-free and On-Arrival Facilities:** Indian passport holders currently enjoy the following facilities globally:
 - **27 countries:** Visa-free entry
 - **47 countries:** Visa on Arrival
 - **66 countries:** Electronic-visa (e-visa) facility

Conclusion

This statement by the Ministry of External Affairs clarifies the actual statutory character of the passport. It makes it clear that although a passport represents sovereignty and national identity internationally, it is not the primary legal document for resolving citizenship disputes at the domestic level.

Along with this, the data presented on Passport Seva Divas shows that the Government of India is not limited merely to issuing passports, but is promoting "Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration." The expansion of e-passport technology, safety mechanisms for the diaspora, and skill partnerships with global powers (like Germany and Japan) demonstrate India's diplomatic maturity and commitment toward the global interests of its citizens.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Consider the following statements regarding e-Passports—

1. It contains an electronic chip.
2. Its objective is to make travel more secure and faster.
3. E-passports can be used only by diplomatic passport holders.

Select the correct answer—

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "A passport is an indicator of nationality but not the ultimate legal proof of citizenship." Explain this statement from constitutional and administrative perspectives. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

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Page 05 : GS II : Indian Polity/ Preliminary Examination

Recently, the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and 'National Election Watch' released a report after analyzing the self-sworn affidavits of Rajya Sabha MPs. This analysis is based on 226 out of the total 233 MPs of the Upper House (Rajya Sabha), as 4 seats were vacant and the affidavits of 3 MPs were not available. According to the report, 31% of the MPs in this dignified and law-revising chamber of Parliament have declared criminal cases against themselves. This report highlights the serious challenge of growing criminalization and muscle/money power in Indian politics, which is a highly important topic in Indian Polity (GS Paper 2) from the perspective of the UPSC examination.

Core News Analysis

1. Criminal Background of MPs

- **Total Criminal Cases:** Out of the 226 MPs analyzed, approximately 31% (69 MPs) have admitted to having criminal cases registered against them.
- **Serious Criminal Cases:** Out of these, 16% (36 MPs) are individuals who are facing extremely serious criminal cases.
- **Nature of Heinous Crimes:** According to the report, in the current Rajya Sabha, 1 MP has cases registered for murder, 4 MPs for attempt to murder, and 4 other MPs for crimes against women.

2. Party-wise Distribution

The problem of criminalization in politics is not limited to any single party but is prevalent across almost all major political parties:

- **Ruling Party (BJP):** Out of 107 MPs of the Bharatiya Janata Party, 28 (i.e., 26%) MPs have declared criminal cases.
- **Main Opposition Party (Congress):** Out of 29 MPs of the Congress, 12 (i.e., 41%) MPs have declared a criminal background.
- **Regional Parties:** 22% of Trinamool Congress (TMC) MPs (2 out of 9), 25% of DMK MPs (2 out of 8), and 50% of Samajwadi Party (SP) MPs (2 out of 4) have cases registered against them.
- **Other Parties:** 3 out of 4 MPs from TDP, all 3 from Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS), and all 3 from CPI-M have mentioned criminal cases in their affidavits.

3. Concentration of Wealth (Influence of Money Power in Politics)

Along with criminal cases, the presence of billionaire MPs in the House reflects the heavy influence of money power:

31% of Rajya Sabha MPs have declared criminal cases: report

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Around 31% of Rajya Sabha members have declared criminal cases against themselves, of whom 16% have declared serious criminal cases, according to an analysis by the Association for Democratic Reforms and National Election Watch.

The analysis covered 226 of the 233 MPs. In the current Rajya Sabha, four seats from West Bengal are vacant. Three MPs were not analysed as their affidavits were unavailable.

According to the report, one sitting Rajya Sabha member has declared cases related to murder, four have declared cases related to attempt to murder, and four have declared cases related to crimes against women. Among parties, 28 (26%) of the 107 BJP MPs, 12 (41%) of the 29 Congress MPs, two (22%) of the nine MPs from the Trinamool Congress, two (25%) of the eight DMK MPs, and two (50%) of the four MPs from the Samajwadi Party have declared criminal cases.

A total of three of the four Rajya Sabha MPs from the TDP, all three MPs from the BRS, all three MPs from



The analysis covered 226 of the 233 Rajya Sabha members. FILE PHOTO

the CPI(M), two (67%) of the three MPs from the RJD, one (25%) of the four MPs from the AIADMK, one (25%) of the four MPs from the NCP, and one (33%) of the three MPs from the AAP have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits. Of the MPs analysed, 31(14%) are billionaires. Among major parties, seven (7%) of the 107 Rajya Sabha MPs from the BJP, six (21%) of the 29 MPs from the Congress, two (50%) of the four MPs from the YSRCP, two (50%) of the four MPs from the TDP, two (67%) of the three MPs from the BRS, and two (50%) of the four MPs from the NCP have declared assets worth more than ₹100 crore.

Daily News Analysis

- **Billionaire MPs:** Out of the total analyzed MPs, 14% (31 MPs) are billionaires whose declared assets are worth more than ₹100 crores.
- **Distribution of Wealth across Parties:** 7% of BJP MPs, 21% of Congress, 50% of YSRCP, 50% of TDP, 67% of BRS, and 50% of NCP MPs possess assets worth more than ₹100 crores.

4. UPSC Core Analytical Concerns

- **Crisis on Legislative Purity:** The Rajya Sabha is considered a 'House of Intellectuals' that reviews laws passed in haste by the Lok Sabha. The increasing number of members with criminal backgrounds there affects the credibility of the law-making institution.
- **Developmental Politics vs. Muscle Power:** Parties are prioritizing tainted and extremely wealthy candidates based on their 'winnability' rather than choosing candidates with a clean image.
- **Judicial Intervention and Limitations:** Although the Supreme Court has made it mandatory for candidates to advertise their criminal records, due to the excessive delay in conviction, these leaders remain a part of legislative processes for years.

Conclusion

This report by ADR highlights the dark side of Indian electoral democracy, where despite strict rules, the nexus of money power and muscle power in politics remains strong. To stop the criminalization of politics, public awareness or court affidavits alone are not enough. Resolving this requires strict amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1951, so that individuals charge-sheeted for serious and heinous offenses can be barred from contesting elections. Along with this, bringing internal democracy and transparency into the ticket distribution system within political parties is mandatory. Until our lawmakers themselves are blemish-free, the moral foundation of the Rule of Law in the country cannot be fully strengthened.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, in which situation does the disqualification of an MP or MLA primarily apply?

- (a) Upon the filing of a charge sheet
- (b) Upon the registration of an FIR
- (c) Upon conviction by a court (subject to prescribed conditions)
- (d) Upon the commencement of a police investigation

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: What do you understand by the 'criminalisation of politics' in Indian democracy? Briefly mention its major causes. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Page 08 :GS II : Governance / Preliminary Examination

Recently, an editorial analysis was presented regarding a horrific fire tragedy at a coaching center in Lucknow that claimed the lives of 15 people (primarily students). Connecting the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) with 'Surakshit Bharat' (Safe India), this incident underscores the severe cost of administrative inaction and structural neglect in safety enforcement.

Core News Analysis

1. Unplanned Urbanization & Regulatory Failures

- **Illegal Commercial Use:** The three-story building in Lucknow where the incident occurred was not authorized for commercial use. Despite repeated notices, it was not demolished due to administrative negligence.
- **Unregulated Growth of Coaching Centers:** Due to changing employment patterns in this era of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the number of such skill development and coaching centers is increasing rapidly. These centers generate high profits with low capital investment but completely disregard fundamental rules of fire safety and building security.

2. Over-Simplification of "Short Circuit" or "Electrical Fire"

- **Superficial Nature of Investigations:** Following any major fire incident, administrative officials often evade responsibility by citing an "electrical fire" or a short circuit, which conceals the actual technical causes.
- **Hidden Technical Reasons:** Fires caused by electricity have several specific causes, such as:
 - **Overloaded Circuits** due to the increasing use of equipment on the circuit.
 - **Harmonic Currents** generated by modern and complex devices, which create localized hotspots.
 - **Substandard wiring quality** and the absence of Arc-Fault Protection Devices.

3. Lack of Infrastructure and Forensic Forwardness

- **Shortage of Firefighters and Experts:** India not only lacks adequate firefighting infrastructure but also faces a severe shortage of trained 'fire-forensics experts'.

Viksit and Surakshit

The cost of inaction on safety issues is more than that of enforcement

The Lucknow fire, which killed 15 people, mostly students, and injured five others, captures both the promise and the perils of aspirational India. It reflects a booming education economy built around a growing services sector, but also the unplanned urban growth and regulatory failures that often accompany it. India's young population, eager to acquire skills and improve economic prospects, has fuelled an ecosystem of coaching centres and training institutes, many of which operate outside formal regulatory frameworks, require low capital investment and generate high profits. As advances in artificial intelligence threaten to reshape employment patterns and formal educational institutions struggle to keep pace with skill requirements, such centres are likely to proliferate. The three-storey building where the fire occurred was reportedly not authorised for commercial use, yet it escaped demolition despite repeated notices. According to the FIR by the civic authorities, neither the owners nor the businesses operating there had made adequate provisions for fire safety. Such violations are common across India, where commercial and educational establishments have little regard for basic safety norms.

The Lucknow incident is also part of a disturbing pattern. This summer has witnessed a succession of major fire accidents across the country. Public attention usually focuses on administrative negligence, and official explanations frequently end with the phrase "electrical fire" – a description that often conceals more than it reveals. Electrical fires can arise from several identifiable causes, including overloaded circuits caused by growing use of appliances, harmonic currents generated by sophisticated equipment that create localised hotspots, poor-quality wiring, and the absence of arc-fault protection devices. Understanding these causes is key to preventing similar tragedies. This requires a stronger culture of investigation. India suffers from inadequate firefighting infrastructure and a shortage of trained fire-forensics experts capable of conducting rigorous root-cause analyses and recommending systemic remedies. Without such expertise, lessons from each disaster remain limited. The challenge therefore demands a national response. India's ambition of becoming a developed nation cannot be separated from the imperative of ensuring public safety. Yet, many buildings lack mandatory fire detection and suppression systems that are standard in developed countries. A Viksit Bharat must also be a Surakshit Bharat. A nationwide assessment of building safety, even through a scientifically designed sample survey, would provide valuable data for reform. The task may be large, but the human and economic costs of inaction are far greater.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Absence of Root-Cause Analysis:** Without these experts, an in-depth investigation into the actual causes of an accident cannot take place. As a result, no solid systemic remedies are learned from past mistakes.

4. 'Viksit Bharat' vs. 'Surakshit Bharat' (The Strategic Imperative)

- **Standards of Developed Nations:** In developed countries, mandatory 'fire detection and suppression systems' are installed inside buildings as a standard practice, which is lacking in India.
- **Development is Incomplete Without Safety:** India's dream of becoming a developed nation cannot be fulfilled until public safety is ensured. The cost of enforcement is always much lower than the human and economic losses incurred after a major tragedy.

Way Forward

- **National-Level Safety Evaluation:** A comprehensive and scientifically designed sample survey of building safety should be conducted across India to obtain accurate data for reforms.
- **Strengthening Fire-Forensics:** It is imperative to strengthen the fire-forensic infrastructure in the country and increase the number of its experts so that a scientific investigation of every incident can be conducted.
- **Accountability and Strict Punishment:** Strict legal action must be taken against the owners of illegally operated commercial and educational complexes, as well as the local administrative officials who turned a blind eye to them.

Conclusion

Aim, Think & Achieve

This tragic incident in Lucknow is not an isolated event; rather, it is part of a disturbing pattern of widespread apathy toward safety standards across the country. India's ambition should not be limited merely to GDP or economic growth, but must also aim to protect the lives of its citizens. The delay in tightening enforcement and adopting a culture of safety is costing us the lives of our country's future (the youth). A true 'Viksit Bharat' must necessarily be a 'Surakshit Bharat', where the pace of development moves forward with a guarantee of safety.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: What is the primary objective of 'Fire Forensics'?

- (a) Only extinguishing fires
- (b) Granting permission for building construction
- (c) Scientifically analyzing the actual causes of a fire
- (d) Manufacturing electrical equipment

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Rapid urbanization in India has created new challenges regarding fire safety. Briefly outline the key reasons. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Page : 09 : Editorial Analysis

Sustaining India's low-fertility future

India is entering a new demographic phase. The latest Sample Registration System data puts the country's total fertility rate at 1.9 children per woman, below both the global average of 2.2 and the replacement level of 2.1 needed to keep a population stable. For a country that has long worried about population growth, this marks an important turn.

However, the decline is not uniform. Rural fertility is still around the replacement mark, while urban fertility has fallen to 1.5. The sharper divide is geographic. Delhi's fertility rate stands at an ultra-low of 1.2, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are at 1.3. These levels are lower than those in the United States (1.6), Finland (1.4), and Japan (1.3). At the other end, Bihar remains at 2.9, followed by Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), and Rajasthan (2.3).

The implication is that India has crossed into low fertility as a nation, but not as one demographic economy. While some States are already moving rapidly towards ageing, others still have large cohorts set to enter the labour force over the next two decades. India must create productive opportunities for young workers in poorer and younger States, while strengthening income, care, and health systems for older populations where fertility has already fallen very low.

A difficult shift

The transition could indeed be challenging. Western Europe and Japan aged after they had industrialised, brought a large share of workers into formal employment, widened their tax systems, and built welfare institutions with some capacity for risk-pooling. Even then, ageing strained public finances; Japan saw the burden push public debt above 200% of GDP.

India enters the same demographic passage on a weaker institutional and fiscal base. Its



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personal

per-capita income is around \$2,800. Its direct tax base remains narrow, with net direct taxpayers accounting for only about 6% of the total population. State governments, tasked with much of the social-sector response, are already fiscally stretched.

The labour-market base is just as fragile. Since most workers spend their lives in informal or semi-formal work, old-age income security remains largely outside formal employment contracts. A contribution-based pension system works best when earnings are predictable, employment is formal, and workers can save regularly over decades. In India, that assumption holds for only a minority of the workforce.

Existing public safety nets acknowledge this vulnerability but do not provide meaningful income security. The Atal Pension Yojana assumes sustained contributions across one's working life, which is difficult for informal workers with volatile incomes. The old-age pension under the National Social Assistance Programme remains ₹200 a month for those aged 60 to 79 and ₹500 for those above 80. Such support does not protect the elderly from dependence.

Income security, however, is only one part of the problem. For generations, India's welfare state has been partly hidden inside the household. The joint family, co-resident children, and unpaid female care absorbed many of the costs of old age. That arrangement is weakening under the pressure of urbanisation, migration, nuclear households, and women's educational and work aspirations. Studies of left-behind elderly parents show that while children's migration improves monetary resources, it worsens loneliness and health vulnerability.

To be sure, India has about 150 million people aged 60 and above. By 2050, that number is projected to rise to 347 million, or nearly one-fifth of the population. Yet the income base of old age remains weak. NITI Aayog has noted that 70% of the elderly depend on

others while 78% have no pension cover. These numbers explain why India needs an inflation-indexed minimum pension floor, not as a substitute for contributory pensions, but as a basic layer of public risk-pooling for old age.

Ageing will also change the nature of healthcare demand. The pressure will come from the long-term management of hypertension, diabetes, dementia, disability, and palliative dependence. India has shown that sustained public investment can alter demographic outcomes. It did so for fertility, institutional deliveries, and child survival. The same mission-mode action will now be needed for embedding geriatric care into nursing practice, district health planning, and primary care.

The question of migration

The transition also has a federal dimension. The fastest-ageing States will increasingly need workers from younger States. This could be a source of national balance, but only if younger States invest aggressively in education, health, and skills, so that their workers do not merely move into low-wage informality elsewhere. It will also require older, richer, and more urbanised States to treat migrants not as temporary labour but as citizens who help sustain their economies and therefore deserve portable protection. A national labour market cannot rest on welfare systems tied narrowly to domicile. If workers move across State borders, their entitlements must move with them. Portability of welfare benefits must be one of the foundations of an ageing economy.

International evidence shows that low fertility can accompany prosperity. The difficulty is that India is entering mass ageing before completing the transitions that made ageing manageable elsewhere. India's low-fertility future will be sustainable only if stronger public systems gradually assume responsibilities that large families once carried quietly.

Since most workers spend their lives in informal or semi-formal work, old-age income security remains largely outside formal employment contracts

GS Paper I& II: Indian Society and Governance

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "Demography is not destiny; good governance transforms demographic change into demographic dividend." **(15 Marks, 250 Words)**

Context : This article presents a practical analysis of India's changing demographic landscape. According to India's latest Sample Registration System (SRS) data, the country's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined to 1.9. This is lower than both the global average (2.2) and the replacement level required for population stabilization (2.1). For India, which has been grappling with the anxiety of a population explosion, this is an ideological and historic turning point; however, at the same time, it poses serious challenges of 'demographic disparity' and 'old-age management' before the country.

Core News Analysis

1. Sharp Demographic Divide

- **Urban vs. Rural Difference:** While the rural fertility rate in India is still around the replacement level (2.1), the urban fertility rate has dropped rapidly to 1.5.
- **Heavy Disparity Among States:** The TFR levels vary drastically across different states in India:
 - **Ultra-low TFR:** Delhi (1.2), Kerala (1.3), Tamil Nadu (1.3), and West Bengal (1.3). These levels are even lower than developed countries like the US (1.6), Finland (1.4), and Japan (1.3).
 - **High TFR:** On the other hand, the fertility rate is still quite high in Bihar (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), and Rajasthan (2.3).
- **Dual Economy:** This implies that while India has achieved a low fertility rate at the national level, it has not done so as a uniform 'demographic economy'. Some states are rapidly moving towards ageing, while other states will have a massive army of young population entering the workforce for the next two decades.

2. India's Weak Position Compared to Developed Countries

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- "Getting Old Before Getting Rich": Countries like Western Europe and Japan faced demographic shifts (ageing population) only after achieving industrialization, expanding formal employment, building a broad tax base, and creating robust welfare institutions.
- India's Weak Infrastructure: India is entering this phase with an extremely weak institutional and financial foundation:
 - India's per-capita income is only around \$2,800.
 - India's direct tax base is extremely narrow, where only 6% of the total population consists of net direct taxpayers.
 - State governments, which bear the responsibility of the social sector, are already reeling under fiscal stress.

3. Informalization of the Labour Market and Old-Age Insecurity

- Informal Sector: Most of the workers in India are engaged in informal or semi-formal jobs, due to which they lack formal employment contracts or old-age security. A contribution-based pension system succeeds only where there is a regular income, which the majority of India's workforce does not have.
- Inadequate Social Security Net: Current schemes are unable to address this crisis:
 - Atal Pension Yojana (APY): It requires continuous contributions throughout working life, which is difficult for informal workers with fluctuating incomes.
 - National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP): The old-age pension provided under this is a mere ₹200 per month for ages 60–79 and ₹500 per month for those above 80 years, which is like a drop in the ocean in today's times.

4. Disintegration of Family Structure and Care Crisis

- Hidden Welfare State: For generations in India, the responsibility of elderly care relied on joint families, co-residing children, and unpaid domestic chores done by women (Unpaid Female Care).
- Impact of Urbanization and Migration: Due to urbanization, the rise of nuclear families, and the educational and career aspirations of women, this traditional system is breaking down. Migration of children brings money to the elderly, but it increases their loneliness and health vulnerability.
- Warning from Data: Currently, there are about 15 crore (150 million) people above the age of 60 in India, which will increase to 34.7 crore (347 million) by 2050 (about 20% of the total population). According to NITI

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Aayog, 70% of the elderly are dependent on others and 78% have no pension cover. For this, India needs an 'inflation-indexed minimum pension floor'.

5. Healthcare Shift

- Due to the demographic shift, the pressure on healthcare services will now move away from infectious diseases to the management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as:
 - Hypertension and Diabetes
 - Dementia (loss of memory) and Disability
 - Palliative Dependence
- Just as India worked in mission-mode to improve institutional deliveries and child survival, a similarly strong resolve is now required to integrate geriatric care (medical care for the elderly) into primary healthcare and district health plans.

6. Federal Dimension & Migration

- Mobility of Workers: Rapidly ageing southern and western states will need workers from the younger northern states to run their economies.
- Dual Responsibility:
 - To Youth States: States like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh will have to invest heavily in education, health, and skill development so that their workers do not end up being just low-paid informal laborers when they move to other states.
 - To Prosperous States: Prosperous and urbanized states must view migrant workers not merely as 'temporary labor', but as 'citizens'.
- Portability of Welfare Benefits: For a national labor market, it is essential that welfare schemes are not bound by domicile or state borders. If a worker crosses state lines, their rights to ration, health, and social security should also transfer with them.

Conclusion

International experiences show that low fertility rates can pave the path to prosperity, but the challenge with India is that it is entering the phase of "mass ageing" before completing those institutional and economic changes that make this situation manageable.

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India's low-fertility future can be sustainable and secure only if the country's public systems gradually take over the responsibilities that joint families once quietly fulfilled. Only through a robust pension policy, universal geriatric healthcare, and inter-state social security portability can India transform this demographic challenge into an opportunity.

