

# **The Indian Express**

## **Front Page**

### **World population growth rate below 1%, India to surpass china next year (Page no. 1)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relations /Reports)**

India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023, according to the 27th edition of the United Nations' World Population Prospects, 2022.

In 2022, China remains the most populous country in the world with 1,426 million, but India has caught up with a marginally less population of 1,412 million.

The global population will reach 8 billion on November 15, 2022, more than three times the population of 2.5 billion in 1950.

The findings come in the backdrop of a decrease in fertility rates across the globe. The UN report finds that in 2020, for the first time since 1950, the rate of population growth fell below 1 per cent per year and it is projected to continue to slow in the next few decades and through the end of this century.

The population of China was 1,144 million in 1990 compared with India's at 861 million then. The UN projections say that by 2050, India's population will reach 1,668 million, far exceeding China's declining population at 1,317 million. The global population by 2050 would have touched 9.7 billion.

The world's two most populous regions in 2022 were Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, with 2.3 billion people, representing 29 per cent of the global population, and Central and Southern Asia, with 2.1 billion (26 per cent).

China and India accounted for the largest populations in these regions, with more than 1.4 billion each in 2022, says the report. Central and Southern Asia is expected to become the most populous region in the world by 2037.

### **Most states frame draft rules, Centre's push on rollout of labour codes (Page no. 1)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

With the **rollout of the labour codes getting delayed** due to the pandemic, renewed deliberations are underway at the highest levels of government on a fresh implementation schedule, amid divergent views on whether to push through all four codes simultaneously or opt for the more practical option of staggering them.

With most of the states ready with draft rules, the view in the Labour Ministry is converging towards a "one-go" or simultaneous implementation of all four codes, said a senior government official, even as there are concerns about the timing of the rollout.

While early-2023 is being considered a feasible option, the fact that it cuts too close to the 2024 general elections and the possible spillover impact of the farm laws' debacle is a concern.

The streamlining of labour laws has been a work in progress, with the Centre notifying four broad labour codes to replace 29 sets of labour laws: The Code on Wages, 2019; The Industrial Relations Code, 2020; The Code on Social Security, 2020; and The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

Some of the key features of the proposed labour codes include bringing in a national minimum wage, widening of coverage of social security to cover informal and gig/ platform workers, providing greater flexibility to employers in hiring decisions without government permission by raising the threshold for requirement of a standing order rules of conduct for workmen employed in industrial establishments – from 100 workers to 300 workers.

With labour being a concurrent subject, both the Centre and states have to frame laws and rules. While Parliament cleared the four labour codes in 2020, and the Centre pre-published the draft rules for all four codes, some state governments are yet to complete the process.

In the states where the draft rules are pending, most are related to The Code on Social Security and The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.

In West Bengal, draft rules are pending for all four labour codes; in Rajasthan, draft rules are pending for three labour codes. Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Nagaland are among the other states where the draft rules are pending.

### **Defer action on disqualification pleas of Sena MLAs: SC to Speaker (Page no. 2)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

The Supreme Court on Monday asked new Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly, Rahul Narwekar, to defer acting on disqualification petitions pending before him while the court hears the petitions for and against the move.

The **petitions came** in the wake of the political crisis precipitated by a group of Shiv Sena MLAs withdrawing support to party chief Udhav Thackeray and pledging loyalty with rebel Eknath Shinde camp in the party, culminating in the fall of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state.

A bench presided by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared for Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, to convey to the Speaker not to take any action in the matter for now. Both the Thackeray and Shinde factions have filed petitions seeking disqualification of legislators belonging to the other camp.

On June 27, a vacation bench of the apex court, comprising Justices Surya Kant and J B Pardiwala, had extended the time given by then Deputy Speaker Narhari Zirwal to the dissident MLAs to reply to notices issued to them on pleas seeking their disqualification from the Assembly. The court had given time till 5.30 pm on July 12.

The bench also listed the matter for hearing upon reopening of the court after summer recess on Monday. It also listed some other petitions filed subsequently on issues arising out of the political crisis in the state for hearing on July 11.

## **Govt. and Politics**

### **Population imbalance should not be allowed, could lead to anarchy: Yogi (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath told officials that while enforcing population control measures, they should keep in mind population balance and religious demography, saying otherwise it could lead to chaos and anarchy. Speaking at a function to mark the World Population Day in Lucknow, Adityanath said, "When we talk about family planning and population stabilisation, we have to keep in mind that population control programme should go ahead, but the situation of jan sankhiki asuntalan (population imbalance) should not arise.

It should not be that the rate of increase of population of a group of people is more and their percentage is more, while in the stabilisation of the population of some people who are native residents, we maintain the population balance through awareness and enforcement.

Calling this kind of situation worrisome, Adityanath said: "In the countries where such situation of population imbalance arises, it affects the religious demography, and after a while, chaos and anarchy start taking place."

Therefore, whenever we talk about population stabilisation, it should rise above every caste, religion, language, and region, he said, adding "awareness should be created equally".

The CM said that while the population stabilisation programme he been going on for past decades, population can be an achievement for a society to a certain level if seen in terms of "skilled manpower". "But if the population is not healthy, and there is disorder," he said.

### **Forest Act: Centre to decriminalise minor offences (Page no. 6)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Environment)**

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has issued a public notice for decriminalisation of Indian Forest Act, 1927.

The notice, issued on Saturday, says the Ministry is undertaking a review of the Act to decriminalise minor sections of the law, including carrying timber into the forest, trespassing by cattle, and felling a tree.

The ministry note says that at times there are "difficulties in differentiating between major and minor offences", and due to that "punishments are often not distinct".

This abets habitual offenders to commit more crimes, as there is the same level of punishment for both first-time and repeat offenders.

A person who "kindles, keeps or carries any fire" permits cattle to pasture or trespass or causes damage by felling a tree or dragging timber through the forest could earlier be penalised with six months imprisonment or a fine up to Rs 500, or both. At present, the penalty is only a fine of Rs 500.

Imprisonment for such offences has never actually taken place, and is often used as a tool of harassment. So there is no problem in that aspect of decriminalisation. But the provision of imprisonment, whether actually carried out or not, acts as a deterrent.

"What this amendment will do, is instead incentivise offenses, especially that of felling trees which is extremely dangerous. The proposed amendment further does not clarify whether the Rs 500 fine is the cost of felling one tree, or an entire forest can be felled and considered a single offence."

## **Editorial**

### **The most populous (Page no. 8)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relations /Reports)**

The UN Population Division's (UNPD) projection that India will replace China as the world's most populous nation in 2023, four years earlier than expected, can be sobering. But an alarmist view would be outdated.

A variety of metrics — fertility and replacement rates, sex ratio, proportion of the young and old in the country, intra-regional disparities, migration trends — enable a far more nuanced understanding of demographic dynamics today compared to the 1950s when India embarked on its “population control” programme.

The use of such analytical tools has led to significant shifts in demographic studies — the discipline has outgrown its Malthusian moorings and population growth is regarded as a challenge, not an emergency.

At the same time, however, terms such as “population explosion” remain in popular parlance and are often invoked — largely, and often selectively, by the political class — to convey the sense of impending crisis.

Such pronouncements, then, pave the way for coercive measures to limit families. In coming days, policymakers would do well to avoid knee-jerk reactions to the UN agency's statistics. An informed debate is needed.

According to the UNPD, a sustained total fertility rate — the average number of children born to a woman — of 2.1 is necessary for a country to achieve population stability.

The latest National Family Health Survey puts this figure at 2. In other words, India is on course to achieving population stability if it maintains this rate in the next few years — a significant achievement for a country with a TFR of 6 when it commenced its population control programme.

Comparisons with China would be misplaced because force was the leitmotif of Beijing's three-and-a-half-decade-long one-child policy. Governments in India — except for a brief lapse into forced sterilisation during the Emergency — have, in contrast, deployed persuasion and education as tools.

Policymakers have acknowledged the need to give women a greater say in fertility-related decisions. Much more needs to be done on this, of course, in large parts of the country, including in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, whose

TFR is higher than the national average and where gender discrimination has deep social roots.

If India's estimated 700 million women are forced to remain on the sidelines, the country loses out on ideas and perspectives that are critical for addressing its several social and economic challenges — including those related to population — as well as harnessing new opportunities. This should be amongst the first concerns in the wake of the UN report.

### **West Asian quad (Page no. 8)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relations)**

The first summit this week of the awkwardly-named forum I2U2 – which brings together India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States – is exploratory in nature.

The virtual summit between the leaders of the four countries is expected to take place on Thursday during Joe Biden's visit to Israel. But it is by no means the main objective of the US President's visit to the Middle East.

The visit to Israel and Saudi Arabia will see Biden pursue several challenging goals. These include getting Saudi support for reducing the pressure on global oil prices in the wake of the Ukraine war, recalibrating US ties with Saudi Arabia which Biden had promised to make into a “pariah”, deepening the normalisation of relations between Israel and the Arab states, persuading Israel to seek reconciliation with the Palestinians, and renewing American engagement with the Palestinian Authority.

Squeezing the I2U2 summit into this already demanding visit underlines the US bet that India can contribute significantly to peace and prosperity in the region.

It also underlines a new political will in Delhi to break the old taboos on India's West Asian engagement. The I2U2 marks the consolidation of a number of new trends in India's Middle East policy that acquired greater momentum under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The I2U2 was launched last October when the foreign ministers of the four countries met when External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Israel.

The summit this week puts the top leadership's political imprimatur on the forum. What stands out sharply in India's new thinking in the Middle East is that the summit involves three countries that Delhi had traditionally kept a safe political distance from.

Let us start with Israel. Although India was one of the first countries to extend recognition to Israel in 1950, Jawaharlal Nehru held back from establishing full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

PV Narasimha Rao reversed that policy in 1992 but a defensive Congress was hesitant to “own” the relationship. Rao did not travel to Israel nor did he receive an Israeli prime minister.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee of the BJP, which had a more empathetic view of Israel, hosted Israeli PM Ariel Sharon in 2003. In the decade-long rule of the UPA (2004-14), there were no prime ministerial visits in either direction.

While the relationship steadily expanded, there was ideological reluctance in Delhi to give the partnership a political profile. Modi, in contrast, came to power with a determination to impart a political character to the Israel ties.

## **The Idea Page**

### **The missing women (Page no. 9)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relations /Reports)**

The United Nations Population Division released a new set of population projections on July 11, World Population Day. These projections show that India will become the most populous country in 2023, earlier than the year 2027, as expected.

However, this is not because India has not successfully implemented its population policy but because China’s fertility is lower than anticipated.

Following years of stringent population control, restricting most couples to a single child, in 2016, China relaxed its one-child policy to allow two children.

Then, in 2021, it was further relaxed to allow a third child. Nonetheless, Chinese couples seem to have adjusted to life with a single child, and the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in China is barely 1.16.

The size of the population is intimately connected to the power dynamics shaping the relationship between nations, regions and generations. It is, however, a double-edged sword that needs to be skillfully wielded.

So what do population transformations around the globe and within India herald for challenges facing Indian public policy? The following 25 years will bring three different changes in the centre of population gravity: Between nations, between states and between generations. Each will require a finely calibrated response.

First, over the next 25 years, as India approaches a century, we will be blessed with a massive workforce that will cast a long shadow. Globally, one in five working-age persons will live in India.

The challenge is that a sizeable working-age population does not mean many workers. The size of our labour force is constrained by the absence of women from the workforce.

Only about 30 per cent of women aged 15 and above are employed either in wage work on family farms and businesses. With sharply declining fertility and rising education, many Indian women would like to work if they can find suitable jobs.

Unless they can be welcomed into gainful employment, we will not be able to reap the hoped-for demographic dividend. Women are shut out of many sectors of the Indian economy.

### **A suitable intermediary (Page no. 9)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, Polity and Governance)**

How should the NITI Aayog work to improve alignment between the Centre and states as part of ‘Team India’? This would have several dimensions — establishing open borders within the country for an open labour market; facilitating effective implementation of national programmes that promote job creation, improve the quality of the labour force and enhance ease of doing business; ensuring high-quality public expenditure, particularly capital expenditure; and ensuring policy predictability at the state level.

Since its inception in 2015, NITI Aayog has been instrumental in promoting competitive and cooperative federalism. NITI Aayog organises the annual meeting of the Governing Council (GC) under the leadership of the PM, which brings together chief ministers/Lieutenant-governors of the states/UTs to discuss inter-sectoral, inter-departmental and federal issues to accelerate the implementation of the National Development Agenda.

As a run-up to the 2022 GC meeting, the first National Conference of Chief Secretaries was held in Dharamshala from June 15-17. This was also the first time that I, as vice-chairman, NITI Aayog, met all the chief secretaries and other senior officials of all states/UTs on a single platform.

The time spent at Dharamshala enriched my understanding of NITI Aayog’s role in enhancing alignment between the Centre and states and helped crystallise my thoughts in the form of seven propositions.

Proposition one: India’s growth is that of its states and UTs. As custodians of regional policy and prime executors of development programmes, states are the Indian economy’s growth drivers.

States control urban governance, agriculture, power distribution, land records modernisation, labour law simplification and pollution control. For India to remain one of the fastest-growing major economies, states must identify their strengths.

NITI Aayog must ensure productive engagement and dialogue with the states to develop a growth roadmap.

To achieve greater socio-economic cohesion within the country, achieving income convergence across states must be a policy priority. Despite country-wide economic growth, the less developed Indian states are not catching up.

Over the last two decades, half of India's GDP has been contributed by just a handful of states. Broadly, states that have been able to get on the growth ladder have been able to stay there, while the lagging states have found it challenging to catch up.

NITI Aayog needs to engender discourse to address this crucial issue through improved governance structures, adequate financial development and infrastructure.

## **Explained**

### **Reading UN population report (Page no. 11)**

#### **(GS Paper 2, International Relations /Reports)**

According to the 2022 edition of the United Nations' **World Population Prospects (WPP)**, released on Monday, India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023. It also projected the world's population to reach 8 billion on November 15, 2022.

The Population Division of the UN has been publishing the WPP in a biennial cycle since 1951. Each revision of the WPP provides a historical time series of population indicators starting in 1950.

It does so by taking into account newly released national data to revise estimates of past trends in fertility, mortality or international migration.

The world's population continues to grow, but the pace of growth is slowing down: The global population is expected to grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100. In 2020, the global growth rate fell under 1% per year for the first time since 1950.

Rates of population growth vary significantly across countries and regions: More than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just eight countries: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania.

Disparate growth rates among the world's largest countries will re-order their ranking by size. The 46 least developed countries (LDCs) are among the world's fastest-growing.

Many are projected to double in population between 2022 and 2050, putting additional pressure on resources and posing challenges to the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The population of older persons is increasing both in numbers and as a share of the total: The share of the global population aged 65 years or above is projected to rise from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050.

As such, the report warns that countries with ageing populations should take steps to adapt public programmes to the growing proportion of older persons, including by improving the sustainability of social security and pension systems and by establishing universal health care and long-term care systems.

A sustained drop in fertility has led to an increased concentration of the population at working ages (between 25 and 64 years), creating an opportunity for accelerated economic growth per capita: This shift in the age distribution provides a time-bound opportunity for accelerated economic growth known as the "demographic dividend".

## **Economy**

### **RBI paves way for global trade settlement in rupee (Page no. 13)**

#### **(GS Paper 3, Economy)**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has put in place a mechanism to settle international trade in rupees "in order to promote growth of global trade with emphasis on exports from India and to support the increasing interest of global trading community in the rupee".

The central bank's move has come in the wake of increasing pressure on the Indian currency in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and sanctions by the US and the EU.

The RBI mechanism is expected to facilitate importers and exporters to avoid rules that prevent the use of a global currency such as the US dollar for trade with certain countries.

After Russia attacked Ukraine, several countries had imposed sanctions on Russia. Indian companies which were looking for alternative modes of payment for imports can make use of the new mechanism.

In a circular issued to commercial banks on Monday, the RBI said all exports and imports under this arrangement may be denominated and invoiced in rupee (INR).

“Exchange rate between the currencies of the two trading partner countries may be market determined,” the RBI said, without mentioning the name of any country.

According to the central bank, AD (authorised dealer) banks in India have been permitted to open rupee Vostro accounts. Accordingly, for settlement of trade transactions with any country, AD bank in India may open special rupee vostro accounts of correspondent banks of the partner trading country. A vostro account is an account a correspondent bank holds on behalf of another bank.

Indian importers undertaking imports through this mechanism shall make payment in INR which should be credited into the special vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country, against the invoices for the supply of goods or services from the overseas seller /supplier.

Indian exporters, undertaking exports of goods and services through this mechanism, should be paid the export proceeds in INR from the balances in the designated special vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country.