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Time: 45 Min

Date: 06-03-2026

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DRAFT POPULATION MANAGEMENT POLICY TO INCENTIVISE PARENTS HAVING THIRD CHILD

Context

- The Government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced a **Draft Population Management Policy** to address the declining fertility rate and prepare for future demographic challenges.

About

- **The policy aims** to increase the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from **1.5 to the replacement level of 2.1** by encouraging families to have a third child through financial and social incentives.

- **The Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** represents the average number of children a woman is expected to have during her lifetime.

    - A TFR of **2.1** is considered the replacement level needed to maintain a stable population.

- Globally, several advanced economies such as **Japan, Italy, and South Korea** face severe demographic challenges due to very low fertility rates.

Key Features of the Draft Policy

- The policy proposes a **"Poshana – Shiksha – Suraksha"** incentive package for families having a third child.

- **Financial Incentives:** The government will provide 25,000 at the time of delivery of the third child.

    - Families will receive **₹1,000 per month for five years** to support child care and nutrition.

- **Education Support:** The third child will receive free education up to the age of 18 years.

- **Implementation Timeline:** The policy is proposed to be implemented from April 1, 2026, after a period of public consultation.

Economic Implications of Aging Population

- **Increased Public Spending on Pensions:** As the elderly population grows, the burden on social security and pension systems increases, straining state and central government budgets.

- **Reduced Consumer Demand:** An aging population tends to consume less compared to a younger, more active demographic.

- **Pressure on Healthcare Infrastructure:** Aging population comes with a higher prevalence of age-related health issues, placing greater demand on healthcare systems.

    - In 2017-18, southern states accounted for **32%** of India's total out-of-pocket spending on cardiovascular diseases despite having only **one-fifth of the population.**

- **Pressure on Economic Growth Models:** India's economic growth has historically been supported by a demographic dividend. With an aging population, this growth model may need significant adjustments.

Global scenario in Aging Population

- **In Japan** the median age is over 48 years. This demographic shift has led to prolonged economic stagnation, shrinking workforce, and increased public spending on pensions and healthcare.

- **China's one-child policy**, enforced from 1979 to 2015, significantly lowered the birth rate, leading to a rapidly aging population.

- **South Korea** has one of the **world's lowest fertility rates, at 0.78 as of 2022.** This has raised concerns about the potential long-term economic impact, including labor shortages and reduced GDP growth.

Challenges

- **Impact on Women's Labor Participation:** Proposals to increase fertility rates could reduce women's participation in the labor force, negatively impacting economic growth.

- **Higher Fiscal Burden:** Incentive-based policies involving cash transfers, subsidies, and long-term benefits may increase fiscal pressure on State budgets, especially if birth rates rise significantly.

- **Environmental Stress:** A larger population can lead to greater pressure on natural resources such as water, land, and energy, potentially worsening environmental challenges.

Concluding remarks

- The policy represents a **shift from population control to population stabilisation,** reflecting the new demographic realities of several Indian States.

- It highlights the **need for proactive measures to balance population dynamics, economic growth, and social welfare** in the coming decades.

Source: TH

IMPLICATIONS OF WEST ASIA CONFLICT

Context

- The recent missile strikes on Iran triggered a war involving the United States, Israel, and Iran.
  - The conflict has destabilised the already fragile West Asia security order and created global economic uncertainty.

Global Implications of the West Asia Conflict

- **Violation of International Law and Norms:** International law permits the use of force only in cases of self-defence or when authorised by the UN Security Council, but neither condition appears to have been fulfilled.
  - Such actions weaken global norms and may encourage other states to disregard established rules of international conduct.
- **Undermining Diplomacy as a Tool for Conflict Resolution:** Iran was nearing an agreement that involved freezing uranium enrichment, maintaining zero stockpiles of weapons-grade material, and accepting international oversight in exchange for phased sanctions relief.
  - By choosing military action over continued negotiations, the United States and Israel risk weakening confidence in diplomacy as a viable mechanism.
- **Risk of Regional Escalation and Wider Conflict:** If the conflict escalates further, it could involve proxy groups and allied militias, leading to prolonged instability and increased risk of terrorist attacks or retaliatory violence across the region.
- **Disruption of Global Energy Markets:** The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has created uncertainty in global energy markets.
  - The suspension of gas shipments by Qatar has also affected global industrial supply chains, demonstrating the far-reaching economic consequences of the conflict.
- **Humanitarian and Civilian Security Concerns:** When governments perceive an existential threat to their survival, the distinction between military and civilian targets may diminish.
  - Such developments could lead to humanitarian crises, displacement of populations, and long-term social instability.

Implications for India

- **India's Energy Security:** The conflict directly threatens energy security because a large share of India's crude oil imports comes from the Gulf region.
  - Rising global oil prices increase India's import bill, widen the current account deficit, and may contribute to inflationary pressures within the domestic economy.
- **Indian Diaspora:** Millions of Indian workers reside in Gulf countries, making their safety a key concern during periods of regional conflict.
- **Remittances:** India has nearly one crore expatriates who invest billions of dollars in the economy through remittances, real estate, stock markets, and more, the war can cause a big impact on it.
- **Investments:** The UAE's Golden Visa has successfully attracted new-age tech and start-up millionaires and billionaires from India, many of whom live in Dubai and run enterprises in India.
  - The war could impact these and can crash trillion-dollar brands and investments.

Way Ahead

- Maintaining stability in West Asia is essential for India's economic growth, trade routes, and the welfare of its diaspora.
- India may need to strengthen energy diversification strategies, build strategic petroleum reserves, and actively participate in international diplomatic efforts aimed at restoring peace.

Source: IE

JUDICIAL DISSENT AS A PILLAR OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Context

- Supreme Court judge B.V. Nagarathna emphasised that judicial independence includes the freedom of individual judges to express dissenting opinions, even when those views differ from their colleagues.

What is Judicial Dissent?

- Judicial dissent refers to a **judge expressing disagreement with the majority** decision of the court.
- A dissenting opinion explains why a judge disagrees with the reasoning or outcome of the majority judgment.

Significance of Dissent in a Democracy

- **Strengthens Judicial Independence:** Dissent ensures that judges are not compelled to conform

to the majority view. It protects the intellectual autonomy of individual judges.

- **Promotes Constitutional Debate:** Dissenting opinions contribute to legal reasoning and constitutional interpretation. They encourage deeper examination of constitutional principles.

- **Influences Future Judgments:** Many dissenting opinions later become accepted legal principles. They serve as guidance for future courts and legal scholars.

- **Protects Minority Rights:** Dissent often highlights concerns that majoritarian institutions may overlook. It helps courts act as guardians of fundamental rights and civil liberties.

Key Examples of Judicial Dissents in India

- **ADM Jabalpur Case (1976):** In **ADM Jabalpur v. Shivkant Shukla**, the majority of the Supreme Court held that during the Emergency, citizens could not seek judicial remedy for the enforcement of fundamental rights such as personal liberty.
  - H. R. Khanna delivered a historic lone dissent, arguing that the right to life and liberty cannot be suspended even during an Emergency.

- **Kharak Singh Case (1962):** In Kharak Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court upheld certain police surveillance measures.
  - K. Subba Rao dissented, arguing that police surveillance violated the right to privacy.

- **In Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India**, the majority struck down the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) as unconstitutional.
  - Justice Chelameswar delivered the sole dissent, supporting the NJAC and criticising the collegium system for lack of transparency.

Constitutional Provisions accommodating Judicial Independence

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Guarantees freedom of speech and expression, which forms the broader democratic foundation for open and reasoned judicial opinions.

- **Article 50:** Directs the State to maintain separation between the judiciary and the executive, thereby strengthening judicial autonomy.

- **Articles 124 and 217:** Provide security of tenure and safeguards against arbitrary removal of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Challenges Associated with Judicial Dissent

- **Possibility of Professional Consequences:** Judges who express views contrary to the majority may sometimes face unfavourable career outcomes or institutional discomfort.

- **Risk of Misreading Judicial Motives:** In cases involving sensitive political or social questions, dissenting opinions can be interpreted as reflecting personal preferences.

- **Pressure of Case Backlog:** India's judiciary faces a significant burden of pending cases, which often necessitates quicker resolution of disputes.
  - Writing detailed separate opinions requires additional time and deliberation, and therefore heavy workloads reduce the frequency of dissenting judgments.

Concluding remarks

- Judicial dissent is an important element of constitutional adjudication as it encourages **independent reasoning, safeguards civil liberties,** and enriches **constitutional jurisprudence.**

- Addressing institutional constraints and fostering a culture that respects reasoned disagreement can further **strengthen the credibility and effectiveness of the judiciary.**

Source: TH

GENDER JUSTICE GAP: NO COUNTRY HAS ACHIEVED FULL LEGAL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

Context

- Recently, **UN Women,** on **International Women's Day,** issued a global alert highlighting **serious gaps in justice systems worldwide.**

Key Findings of the UN Report

- **Global Legal Inequality:** Women worldwide possess **only 64% of the legal rights available to men**.
  - Many national legal systems fail to adequately protect women's rights.
  - Weak justice mechanisms undermine the **rule of law and democratic institutions**.

- **Major Legal Gaps Affecting Women:** In **54% of countries**, rape is **not defined based on consent**. It limits prosecution and recognition of several forms of sexual violence.
  - In **nearly three-fourths of countries**, girls can still be **legally married under certain conditions**.

- **Economic Discrimination: 44% of countries lack laws mandating equal pay for work of equal value**.
  - This legal gap perpetuates the **gender wage gap and economic inequality**.
- **Rising Threats to Women's Rights:** UN Women warns that violations against women's rights are increasing due to **weak enforcement and lack of accountability**.
  - Rapid technological expansion has led to **online harassment, cyberstalking and digital abuse**.
- **Sexual Violence in Conflict:** Rape continues to be used as a **weapon of war**.
  - Reported cases of sexual violence have **increased by 87% in the past two years**.

Barriers to Accessing Justice

- **Social Norms and Stigma:** Victim-blaming and societal pressure discourage reporting.
- **Institutional Barriers:** Lack of trust in police, courts, and legal institutions.
- **Practical Constraints:** High legal costs, long judicial processes, language barriers and lack of legal awareness.
- **Impunity and Weak Enforcement:** Crimes such as **femicide and sexual violence often go unpunished**.

Emerging Global Challenges

- **Backlash Against Gender Equality:** Recent years have witnessed **growing resistance to gender equality policies** in several countries.
  - Laws restricting women's freedoms and participation are being introduced.
  - Women's voices are being suppressed in political and public spaces.
- **Digital and Online Violence:** Rapid technological growth has led to **online harassment, cyber-bullying, and digital abuse** targeting women.
  - Weak regulation results in **impunity for perpetrators**.

Progress Achieved So Far

- **87% of countries have enacted domestic violence laws.**
- Over **40 countries have strengthened constitutional protections for women and girls** in the last decade.
- International frameworks such as **CEDAW, SDG-5 (Gender Equality), and UNSC Resolution 1325** have encouraged reforms.

- However, **laws alone are insufficient** without effective implementation.

Global Call to Action

- The **International Women's Day 2026 theme: 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls'** emphasizes urgent reforms:
  - **End impunity** for gender-based violence.
  - **Strengthen rule of law and gender-sensitive justice systems.**
  - **Ensure equal legal rights and economic opportunities.**
  - **Regulate digital platforms to prevent online abuse.**
  - **Promote legal awareness and accessible legal aid for women.**
- The **70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** is considered a crucial opportunity to **reverse setbacks and accelerate gender justice globally**.

India & Women: Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 14:** Equality before law
- **Article 15(1) & 15(3):** Prohibition of discrimination and special provisions for women
- **Article 39(d):** Equal pay for equal work

Key Laws

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)
- Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013)
- Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (2006).

Source: DTE

USE OF AI IN HEALTHCARE

Context

- A professional agency has revealed that regulated data, including patient records and medical information, is especially at risk, accounting for 89% of all data policy violations occurring in the area of generative AI usage.

Use of AI in Healthcare

- **AI-based tools** can diagnose and predict diseases, streamline clinical practices, improve hospital management, assist in drug discoveries and aid in healthcare research.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR's) four priorities for AI in Health

• Collating quality data across research institutions.

• Forging private sector partnerships.

• Generating real-world evidence through ICMR's network of institutes.

• Urgently integrating health and medical professionals into the AI workforce pipeline.

Arguments in Favour of use of AI in Healthcare

• **Improved Diagnostic Accuracy:** AI can analyse large medical datasets and imaging scans quickly, helping doctors detect diseases at an earlier and more accurate stage.
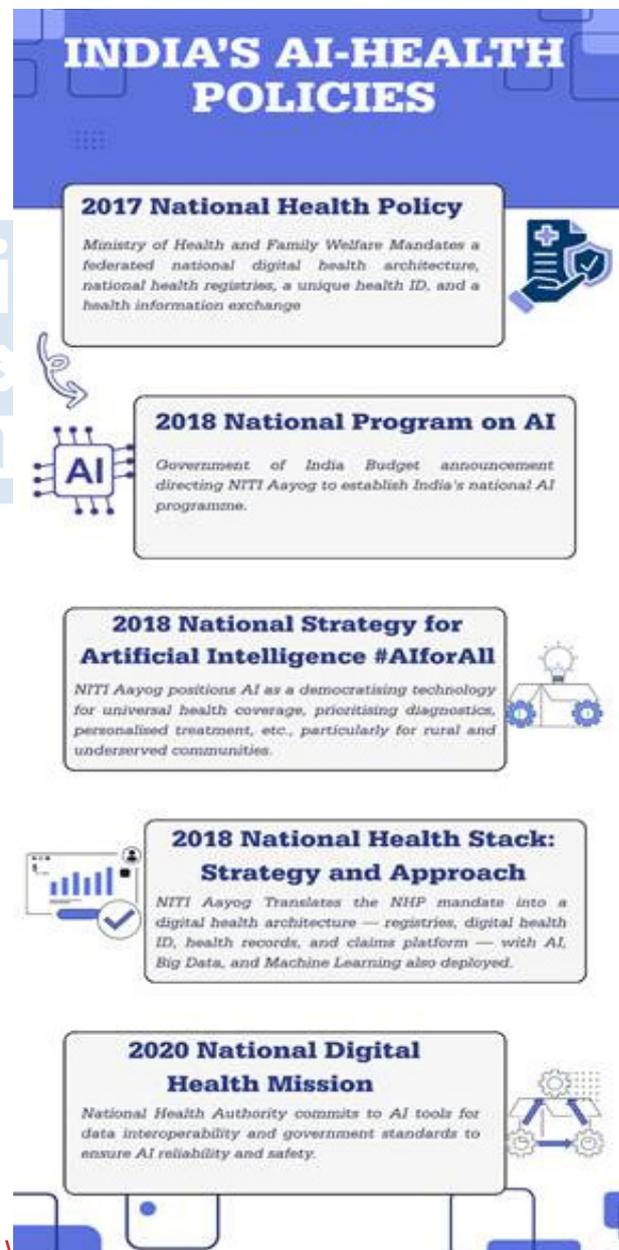
- **Enhanced Efficiency and Time Saving:** AI automates routine tasks like medical record management, scheduling, and data analysis, allowing healthcare professionals to focus more on patient care.

- **Personalised Treatment:** AI can analyse genetic information, lifestyle data, and medical history to develop tailored treatment plans for individual patients.

- **Early Disease Prediction and Prevention:** AI models can identify patterns in health data and predict potential diseases, enabling preventive healthcare and timely interventions.

- **Improved Drug Discovery and Research:** AI accelerates the process of drug discovery and clinical trials by analysing complex biological data, reducing time and cost in developing new medicines.

- **Better Healthcare Accessibility:** AI-powered telemedicine and virtual health assistants can extend healthcare services to remote and underserved areas, improving access to medical care.

- **Support in Public Health Management:** AI helps governments and health organisations analyse large datasets for disease surveillance, outbreak prediction, and policy planning.

Arguments Against

- **Risk of Data Leakage through AI Prompts:** Healthcare workers may unknowingly include patient details in prompts or uploaded documents while using Generative AI tools, leading to exposure on external servers.

- **Use of Personal Accounts:** Many employees use personal AI tools or cloud accounts instead of secure institutional systems, making it difficult for organisations to monitor or prevent data breaches.

- **Growing Cybersecurity Threats in Healthcare:** The healthcare sector is already a prime target for cybercriminals, and increased digitalisation and AI integration further expand the attack surface.

- **Lack of Awareness and Training:** Healthcare staff may lack adequate cybersecurity training, increasing the chances of unintentional data exposure.

- **Regulatory and Ethical Concerns:** Breaches of patient data can violate data protection laws and ethical obligations of medical confidentiality, undermining trust in healthcare systems.

India's AI-Health Policies

- **Strategy for AI in Healthcare for India (SAHI):** SAHI works as a recommendatory national framework on the way AI can be integrated into healthcare services.

  - Launched as a national framework, SAHI outlines a structured roadmap for integrating AI into healthcare delivery across India.

- **BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI):** It was launched during the AI Summit, provides a structured mechanism for testing and validating Health AI solutions before deployment at scale.

  - It was developed by the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in collaboration with the National Health Authority.

INDIA'S AI-HEALTH POLICIES

2017 National Health Policy
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Mandates a federated national digital health architecture, national health registries, a unique health ID, and a health information exchange

2018 National Program on AI
Government of India Budget announcement directing NITI Aayog to establish India's national AI programme.

2018 National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence #AIforAll
NITI Aayog positions AI as a democratising technology for universal health coverage, prioritising diagnostics, personalised treatment, etc., particularly for rural and underserved communities.

2018 National Health Stack: Strategy and Approach
NITI Aayog Translates the NHP mandate into a digital health architecture — registries, digital health ID, health records, and claims platform — with AI, Big Data, and Machine Learning also deployed.

2020 National Digital Health Mission
National Health Authority commits to AI tools for data interoperability and government standards to ensure AI reliability and safety.

Source: TH

NEWS IN SHORT

STRAIT OF HORMUZ

Context

- The war in West Asia has impacted trade through the Strait of Hormuz.

About

- The Strait of Hormuz lies between **Iran to the north and Oman and the United Arab Emirates to the south**, linking the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

- At its narrowest point it is about **33 kilometres** wide, with shipping lanes just a few kilometres across in either direction.

- Nearly half of India's crude oil and around 60 per cent of its natural gas imports pass through the strait.

Persian Gulf

- The Persian Gulf lies between **Iran (north) and the Arabian Peninsula (south).**

- It connects to the **Arabian Sea through the Strait of Hormuz,** one of the world's most critical maritime chokepoints.

- The Persian Gulf is the **most important source of oil and gas for India.**

  - Around 90% of India's imports of LPG, 40% of its LNG and 35% of its crude oil came from the Persian Gulf in 2025.

Source: IE

IRANIAN KURDS

Context

- U.S. President Donald Trump encouraged Iranian Kurdish forces to launch attacks against Iran as conflict in West Asia widened.

About

- **Kurds:** The Kurdish people are an **ethnic minority group in the Middle East** without an independent state.

  - The population ranges between **25 million and 45 million worldwide,** with most living in the mountainous region across parts of **western Iran, eastern Turkey, northern Iraq and Syria, and Armenia.**

  - They speak various Kurdish dialects, not related to Turkish or Arabic; and are mostly **Sunni Muslims.**

- **Turkey has the largest population** of approximately 15 to 20 million people while Iran has 8-12 million Kurds.

- **Concerns of Kurds:** They were promised a nation post-WWI, but never granted.

  - They faced rebellions, state suppression of language and culture.

- **Kurdistan Regional Government:** Following years of conflict and the 1991 Gulf War, the Kurds established the Kurdistan Regional Government (K.R.G.) in Iraq, which is now a constitutionally recognised autonomous region.

- **In the ongoing Israel-Iran-U.S. conflict,** the Kurds might be viewing an opportunity to take down the Iranian regime and achieve autonomy.

Source: TH

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2026

Context

- PM Modi attended the inaugural session of the Raisina Dialogue 2026 in New Delhi.
  - The theme for 2026 edition is **"Samskara: Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement."**

Raisina Dialogue

- The Raisina Dialogue is India's premier **conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics** committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community.
- It brings together **global leaders, policymakers, diplomats, scholars,** and strategic experts to discuss major international challenges.
  - **The first session** was held in **2016.**
- It is hosted by the Delhi-based **Observer Research Foundation,** in collaboration with the **External affairs ministry** of India.

Source: DD News

GRAVITY BOMB

Context

- US Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth announced that the US would be shifting to 'gravity bombs', marking a major tactical pivot in the ongoing campaign against Iran.

What is a Gravity Bomb?

- A gravity bomb (or free-fall bomb) is an unpowered munition dropped from an aircraft. Unlike cruise missiles such as the Tomahawk cruise missile, it has no engine and falls toward the target under gravity, guided by the aircraft's speed and altitude.
- Despite their World War–era origins, gravity bombs remain widely used by the United States Air Force in conflicts such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria.
- **Modernisation:** Many gravity bombs are fitted with **Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM)** kits, which use GPS and steerable fins to convert them into precision-guided munitions.
- **Types:** The United States widely uses the Mark 80 series, including;
  - **Mk-82 (500 lb):** Soft targets such as vehicles or radar sites.

- **Mk-83 (1,000 lb):** Reinforced structures and command posts.
  - **Mk-84 (2,000 lb):** Bunker-buster for hardened facilities.
- **Key Feature:** Gravity bombs are relatively cheap ($25,000–$30,000 with JDAM) but require aircraft to fly close to targets, making them effective mainly when air superiority is achieved.

Source: IE

INDIA'S 7TH NATIONAL REPORT TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Context

- India has submitted its 7th National Report to the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD),** assessing national progress toward biodiversity targets for 2030.

About

- The report evaluates India's performance against 23 National Biodiversity Targets (NBTs) aligned with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF).
- It finds that **only two targets are clearly on track**, despite improvements in policy frameworks, forest cover, and ecosystem restoration.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **Origin:** The Convention was opened for signature in **1992** at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (**Rio Earth Summit).**
  - The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on **29 December 1993.**
- **The first session of the COP** was scheduled in **1994 in the Bahamas**.
- **Secretariat:** Montreal, Canada.
- **Ratification:** The CBD has been ratified by **196 nations**, making it one of the most widely adopted international treaties.
  - **The United States** is the only UN member state that has **not ratified** the convention.
- **It has 3 main objectives;**
  - The conservation of biological diversity
  - The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity

- ◆ The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
- **The governing body** is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which **meets every two years.**

- **The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing** are supplementary agreements to the CBD.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework was concluded at COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in **Montreal, Canada, in 2022.**
- This framework is a landmark agreement aimed at addressing the global biodiversity crisis.
- It features **23 targets to be met by 2030** and **four global goals for 2050** to preserve biodiversity for current and future generations.
- The agreement is **not binding** on members.

Source: DTE

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