DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 21-01-2025

GS-1

1. Why fertility levels are declining in India

GS-2

2. PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)

3. QS World Future Skills Index 2025

4. Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

GS-3

5. 8thPay Commission

Why fertility levels are declining in India

Syllabus: GS-1: Population Geography -

Context:

- A demographic analysis covering 204 countries and territories (1950-2021) reveals a global decline in fertility.

- Pro-natal policies are unlikely to reverse the trend; fertility rates are projected to remain low globally.

India's Fertility Trends

- **Historical Shift**:

    o Fertility rate dropped from **6.18 (1950s)** to **1.9 (2021)**, below the replacement level of **2.1**.

    o Projected Total Fertility Rate (TFR) by 2100: **1.04** (barely one child per woman).

- **Concerns**:

    o Political and socio-economic implications, especially in southern States, which may lose parliamentary seats post the **2026 delimitation exercise**.

Reasons for Decline in Fertility

- **Social and Economic Factors**:

    o Increased **female literacy**, **workforce participation**, and **women's empowerment**.

    o Shifting aspirations favor career and financial independence over early marriage and motherhood.

- **Changing Attitudes**:

    o Delay or avoidance of marriage and reproduction.

    o Increased **infertility rates** in men and women.

    o Higher number of **abortions** (data insufficient).

- **Migration**:

    o Young professionals moving abroad for education and employment, raising families overseas.

Implications of Declining Fertility

- **Demographic Transition**:

- o Rapid transition in southern States with **ageing populations** and shrinking **young workforce**.

  - o Increased demand for **healthcare** and **social security** to support the elderly.

- ➢ **Economic Effects**:

  - o Decline in workforce availability and productivity.

  - o Burgeoning costs for elder care and welfare programs.

Fertility Decline in Southern States

- ➢ **Early Transition**:

  - o Kerala achieved replacement level fertility in **1988**, other southern States followed by mid-2000s.

- ➢ **Kerala's Scenario**:

  - o Proportion of elderly population expected to exceed children (**23% by 2036**).

  - o Outmigration of educated youth for better opportunities.

  - o Increasing proportion of older mothers leading to **pregnancy-related morbidities**.

  - o High wages and quality of life attracting **internal migrants** (estimated **60 lakh migrants by 2030**).

Global Lessons and Way Forward

- ➢ **Irreversibility of Fertility Decline**:

  - o Countries like **South Korea** failed to reverse the trend despite significant investments; TFR fell from **0.78 (2022)** to **0.73 (2023)**.

- ➢ **Recommendations**:

  - o Implement socio-economic policies for **economic growth** and better **job prospects**.

  - o Leverage the potential of senior citizens to contribute to the economy.

  - o Develop sustainable models to manage the demographic shift effectively.

PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Sector – Health related schemes.

Context:

- The **PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)** is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** with additional **Central Sector (CS)** components, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the financial year **2021-22**.
- With a budget of **₹64,180 crore** allocated for five years (2021-22 to 2025-26), it is one of the most ambitious healthcare programs aimed at addressing critical infrastructure gaps across India.

Objectives

- **Healthcare Infrastructure Development:**

  o Establishing robust health systems at **primary, secondary, and tertiary levels** to reduce health inequities.

- **Disease Surveillance Strengthening:**

  o Enhancing **early detection** and **response systems** for infectious diseases and pandemics.

- **Health Research Capabilities:**

  o Promoting health research through state-of-the-art facilities and skilled manpower development.

Key Components

National-Level Initiatives

- **Critical Care Infrastructure:**

  o Creation of **12 Central Institutions** with 150-bedded **Critical Care Blocks** for tertiary-level care.

- **Disease Surveillance:**

  o Upgrading the **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)** and establishing regional branches and metropolitan health surveillance units.

  o Strengthening the **Integrated Health Information Portal** to link public health labs nationwide.

- **Emergency Preparedness:**

o Establishment of **15 Health Emergency Operation Centres**, mobile hospitals, and specialized public health units at **airports, seaports, and land crossings** for effective disaster management.

State-Level Support

➢ **Rural Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs):**

o **17,788 rural HWCs** for better accessibility in remote and difficult areas.

➢ **Urban Health and Wellness Centres:**

o **11,024 urban HWCs**, focusing on areas with slum-like conditions.

➢ **Public Health Units and Labs:**

o Establishment of **3,382 Block Public Health Units (BPHUs)** and **Integrated Public Health Labs (IPHLs)** in **730 districts** for advanced diagnostic and public health capabilities.

➢ **Critical Care Hospital Blocks (CCBs):**

o Development of **602 CCBs** in districts with populations over 5 lakh, ensuring seamless **referral linkages** and critical care services.

Pandemic Preparedness and Research

1. **One Health Institutions:**

o Establishment of integrated research and training facilities to address zoonotic diseases and promote **interdisciplinary health approaches**.

2. **National Virology and Biosafety Labs:**

o Setting up new **National Institutes for Virology** and **Biosafety Level III Labs** for advanced research and pandemic readiness.

Key Focus Areas

➢ **Urban Healthcare:**

o Addressing health challenges in **slum populations** and highly urbanized regions.

➢ **Rural Accessibility:**

o Bridging gaps in healthcare services in **hard-to-reach areas** to ensure equitable access.

Significance

➢ **Bridging Infrastructure Gaps:** Strengthening healthcare systems to handle emergencies and routine services efficiently.

- ➤ **Pandemic Readiness:** Building resilience against future pandemics through better research and emergency response infrastructure.

- ➤ **Equity in Healthcare:** Focused efforts to reduce disparities in urban and rural healthcare accessibility.

Challenges and Recent Developments

The mission's implementation faces challenges like intergovernmental coordination, particularly in states like Delhi, as highlighted by the recent Supreme Court stay on the Delhi High Court's directive for the Delhi government to sign an MoU with the Centre. Ensuring seamless integration between **Centre-State partnerships** is crucial for the program's success.

QS World Future Skills Index 2025

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Sector – Education.

Context:

New QS future skills report ranks India 2nd in job market readiness, 25th overall

QS World Future Skills Index 2025: Key Insights and India's Performance

About the QS World Future Skills Index:

- ➤ **What it is**: A global ranking system assessing countries' readiness to meet evolving job market demands by focusing on skill development, education systems, and economic transformation.

- ➤ **Released by**: Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), renowned for its global education and skills rankings.

- ➤ **Aim**: To measure how well countries prepare their workforce for future-critical skills, such as:

  - o Digital competencies.

  - o Artificial Intelligence (AI).

  - o Green technologies.

  - o Sustainability.

India's Ranking and Performance:

- ➤ **Overall rank**: 25th globally.

➢ **Category highlight**: 2nd in the **"Future of Work"** category, ranking just behind the United States. This reflects India's strong preparedness for tech-driven and future-focused roles.

Key Criteria in the QS Future Skills Index:

➢ **Skills Fit**:

   o Assesses how well graduates' skills align with current employer demands.

➢ **Academic Readiness**:

   o Evaluates the ability of higher education systems to equip students for rapidly evolving job markets.

➢ **Future of Work**:

   o Measures readiness for roles requiring advanced skills in AI, digital technology, green technologies, and more.

➢ **Economic Transformation**:

   o Analyzes a nation's ability to drive sustainable growth, foster innovation, and improve workforce efficiency.

Key Insights from the Report:

Strengths:

➢ **AI and Venture Capital**: India excels in integrating artificial intelligence and attracting venture capital, critical for fostering innovation.

➢ **Demographics and Startups**: A robust youth population and a thriving startup ecosystem position India as a strong contender in the global skills landscape.

Weaknesses:

➢ **Sustainability and Higher Education**: India lags in areas like sustainability-focused innovation and aligning higher education curricula with future skills.

➢ **Skill Gaps**: Gaps persist in creativity, problem-solving, and entrepreneurial thinking.

Opportunities:

➢ **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP)**: A powerful tool to address skill gaps, align education with industry demands, and modernize curricula.

➢ **Academia-Industry Collaboration**: Expanding partnerships can foster innovation, bridge skill gaps, and strengthen India's global position in future skill preparedness.

India's performance in the QS World Future Skills Index underscores its potential as a global hub for future-ready talent, provided it addresses critical gaps in education, sustainability, and innovation alignment.

Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

Syllabus: GS-2; Governance

Context:

➢ The "Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan" app was launched by the Defence Minister during the Army Day celebrations. It aims to provide an immersive way for citizens to explore India's rich wartime history and heritage through innovative technology.

About Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

➢ **Developers:** The app is a collaboration between the **Ministry of Defence** and the **Ministry of Tourism**.

➢ **Purpose:**

o Promotes **battlefield tourism** by showcasing India's iconic battlefields and border areas.

o Encourages **connectivity, tourism, and socio-economic development** in remote and border regions.

o Facilitates collaboration between the **Army and local civil authorities** while maintaining operational preparedness.

Key Features

➢ **Comprehensive Battlefield Information:**

o Offers details of various historic battlefields and border areas.

o Provides **virtual tours**, **historical narratives**, and **interactive content**.

o Sites are featured under the **Incredible India campaign** by the Ministry of Tourism.

➢ **Travel Planning Support:**

o Acts as a **one-stop platform** for visitors, assisting with travel arrangements.

o Includes guidance on obtaining permits for restricted locations.

➢ **Showcased Locations:**

o **75+ forward sites** have been selected for battlefield tourism, including:

▪ **Galwan Valley** (Ladakh)

▪ **Doklam** (India-Bhutan-China tri-junction)

▪ **Longewala** (Thar Desert, site of the 1971 India-Pakistan war)

▪ **Nathu La** (Sikkim, site of the 1967 India-China clashes)

➢ **Historical and Strategic Importance:**

    o   Highlights conflicts such as:

        ▪ The 1962 war with China.

        ▪ The 1971 India-Pakistan war.

        ▪ Clashes at Nathu La in 1967.

    o   Brings visitors closer to the experiences of soldiers stationed in challenging terrains.

Broader Impacts

➢ **Cultural Awareness:** Enhances public knowledge of India's wartime history and the valor of its armed forces.

➢ **Tourism Boost:** Promotes remote regions as tourist destinations, creating opportunities for local communities.

➢ **Strategic Visibility:** Encourages national pride by showcasing regions of historical military significance.

This initiative, combining technological innovation and historical exploration, is a unique step toward blending patriotism with tourism.

8ᵗʰPay Commission

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy – Pay Commission.

Context:

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, recently approved the establishment of the **8th Pay Commission** to revise salaries and allowances for central government employees and pensioners.

➢ **Replaces**: The 7th Pay Commission, implemented in 2016.

➢ **Coverage**: Over **49 lakh employees** and **65 lakh pensioners**.

➢ **Significance**: Aims to ensure fair compensation aligned with inflation and economic changes.

About the Pay Commission

Introduction

The Pay Commission is constituted by the **Central Government** approximately every decade to:

➢ Review and recommend changes to the **pay structure** of its employees.

➢ Suggest measures for allowances and pensions.

Nodal Agency

The **Department of Expenditure**, under the **Ministry of Finance**, oversees its operations.

Applicability

The recommendations apply to:

➢ **Central Government Employees**: Paid from the **Consolidated Fund of India**.

➢ **Civil and Military Personnel**: All central civil services and defense forces.

➢ **Pensioners**: Government retirees receiving pensions.

Exclusions:

➢ Employees of **Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** and autonomous bodies, which follow separate pay scales.

Dearness Allowance (DA)

Definition: A cost-of-living adjustment to offset inflation for central government employees and pensioners.

➢ **Inflation Basis**: Calculated using the **Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW)**.

➢ **Application**: DA hikes apply to the basic pay, excluding additional perks.

➢ **Formula**: Determined by the Pay Commission to ensure inflation does not erode purchasing power.

Composition of the Pay Commission

➢ **Chairman**: A senior government official or expert in finance/public policy.

➢ **Two Members**: Specialists in finance, law, or public administration.

➢ **Support Staff**: Administrative and research teams for data collection and analysis.

Factors Influencing Pay Commission Recommendations

➢ **Economic Conditions**: Fiscal health, GDP growth, inflation rates, and revenue collections.

➢ **Employee Demands**: Input from unions advocating better wages and conditions.

➢ **Cost of Living**: Inflation, housing, education, and other expenses.

➢ **Global Comparisons**: Pay parity with international standards for specialized roles.

➢ **Technological Advancements**: Skill requirements and reliance on technology.

> **Budgetary Constraints**: Recommendations must align with fiscal capabilities to avoid excessive strain.

Impact of the Pay Commission

> **Economic Growth**:

  o Increased salaries boost consumption, benefitting sectors like **real estate**, **automobiles**, and **consumer goods**.

> **Government Expenditure**:

  o Recommendations often increase the fiscal burden, requiring careful **budget allocation**.

> **Employee Morale**:

  o Fair and updated pay scales enhance satisfaction and productivity.

> **Pensioner Welfare**:

  o Revised pensions ensure financial security and dignity for retirees.