



Daily Current Affairs



To The Point by Dhananjay Gautam

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1 Sharp Decline in Birth Rates in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Delhi: Twice the National Average

Context: Recent data from the **Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021**, released by the **Registrar General of India**, reveals a stark divergence in birth rate trends across Indian states. Notably, **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Delhi** are witnessing a decline in birth rates at **twice the pace of the national average**, signaling an accelerating demographic transition in these regions.

**Understanding the Crude Birth Rate (CBR):**

The **Crude Birth Rate (CBR)** refers to the number of **live births per 1,000 individuals** in a population within a year. It is a crucial metric in assessing population growth and planning public resources.

Key Findings of the Report:

- **India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** in 2021 remained steady at **2.0**, the same as in 2020. A TFR of **2.1** is considered the **replacement level**, needed to maintain population stability.
- The **national crude birth rate** in 2021 was **19.3 per 1,000**, declining annually by **1.12%** from 2016 to 2021.
- In comparison, birth rates declined much faster in:
 - **Tamil Nadu:** ↓ **2.35% annually**
 - **Delhi:** ↓ **2.23% annually**
 - **Kerala:** ↓ **2.05% annually**
- Other states with faster-than-average declines include:
 - **Maharashtra** (1.57%), **Gujarat** (1.24%), **Odisha** (1.34%), **Himachal Pradesh** (1.29%), **Haryana** (1.21%), and **Jammu & Kashmir** (1.47%).
- **States with the slowest decline** include:
 - **Rajasthan** (0.48%), **Bihar** (0.86%), **Chhattisgarh** (0.98%), **Jharkhand** (0.98%), **Assam** (1.05%), **Madhya Pradesh** (1.05%), **West Bengal** (1.08%), and **Uttar Pradesh** (1.09%).
- **Increase in registered births** was noted in 11 states and UTs, including **Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, J&K, Ladakh**, and several northeastern states.

Fertility and Reproduction Trends:

- **TFR above national average** was observed in **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh**, indicating sustained high fertility rates.
- **Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR)** for India stood at **1**, meaning each woman is, on average, having one daughter who survives to reproductive age.
- **States with higher GRR** than the national average include **Bihar, Rajasthan, MP, and UP**, reflecting persistent high fertility.

Major Concerns:

1. **Uneven Demographic Transition:** States such as **Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh** show a **slow decline in birth rates**, leading to **regional population imbalances**. This may result in **strain on resources**, infrastructure, and public services.



2. **North-South Population Divide:** Southern and western states are nearing or falling **below replacement fertility levels**, while northern and eastern regions remain above, causing a **“two-speed” demographic transition** in the country.

3. **Aging Population in Low-Fertility States:**

States like **Kerala and West Bengal** face the challenge of **rapid aging**, potentially leading to:

- **Shrinking workforce**
- **Increased burden on healthcare and pensions**
- **Need for revised economic and social support systems**

4. **High Fertility Persists in Underserved Regions:** Despite a national TFR of 2.0, high fertility in **Bihar (3.0)** and **Uttar Pradesh (2.7)** points to gaps in **education, healthcare, and awareness**, especially in rural areas.

Way Forward: Policy Recommendations:

- **Prepare for an Aging Society:** Low-birth-rate states must prepare for **elder care, pension reforms, and health infrastructure for the elderly**.

Reduce Regional Inequalities:

- Invest in **job creation, education, and infrastructure** in high-growth states to balance national development.

Centre-State Collaboration:

- Ensure **coordinated population policy efforts**, with **flexible funding** mechanisms to support state-specific needs.

Conclusion:

India's demographic future is unfolding in **two contrasting directions**—with **southern and western states stabilizing or shrinking**, and **northern and eastern states continuing to grow**. Effective planning, inclusive policies, and data-driven decisions will be essential in navigating this complex population landscape.

2 Justice B.R. Gavai Takes Oath as the 52nd Chief Justice of India

Context: Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai was officially sworn in as the **52nd Chief Justice of India (CJI)** on May 14, 2025. The oath was administered by **President Droupadi Murmu** at Rashtrapati Bhavan. Justice Gavai succeeds **Justice D.Y. Chandrachud**, and his appointment is notable not only for his legal acumen but also for his background—he is **only the second Dalit to become the CJI**, following **Justice K.G. Balakrishnan**.



Constitutional Basis for Appointment:

The **Constitution of India** provides the framework for the judiciary but **does not specify a detailed procedure for the appointment** of the Chief Justice of India.

- **Article 124(1)** states: “There shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India and other judges.”
- **Article 124(2)** authorizes the **President** to appoint **Supreme Court judges**, including the CJI.
- However, **no formal mechanism or selection process** is laid out in the Constitution for appointing the CJI.

Established Convention for Appointment:

In the absence of constitutional procedure, **long-standing convention governs the appointment** of the Chief Justice:

- The **outgoing CJI recommends the name of the senior-most judge** of the Supreme Court as their successor.
- **Seniority is determined** not by age but by the **length of service in the Supreme Court**.
- This **convention of seniority** has been consistently followed to maintain the **independence and impartiality** of the judiciary.

Eligibility Criteria for Appointment:

As per **Article 124(3)** of the Constitution, a person is qualified for appointment as a **Supreme Court judge**, and thereby as CJI, if they:

- Are a **citizen of India**; and
- Have been a **High Court judge for at least five years**, or
- Have been an **advocate in a High Court for at least ten years**, or
- Are deemed a **distinguished jurist** in the opinion of the President.

Tenure and Age of Retirement:

- The **Chief Justice of India** does not have a fixed tenure.
- All **Supreme Court judges retire at the age of 65**.
- Justice Gavai, born on **November 24, 1960**, is expected to serve as CJI for **approximately six months**, retiring in **November 2025**.

Removal Procedure for Chief Justice of India:

A **Chief Justice or judge of the Supreme Court** can be removed only through a **rigorous impeachment process**:

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- As per **Article 124(4)** and the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**, removal requires:
 - A **motion in Parliament**, supported by a **special majority** in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.
 - Grounds for removal include “**proved misbehaviour or incapacity.**”
 - No Chief Justice of India has ever been successfully impeached.

Additional Facts: A Milestone in Representation

- Justice Gavai hails from **Maharashtra** and has served as a judge of the **Bombay High Court** before being elevated to the Supreme Court in 2019.
- His elevation is seen as a **step toward greater diversity** and inclusion in the **higher judiciary**.
- His legal career spans over **three decades**, and he is known for his judgments in **constitutional law, criminal justice, and public interest litigation**.

Looking Ahead:

Justice B.R. Gavai's tenure, though brief, is expected to focus on:

- **Speeding up judicial reforms**
- **Improving case disposal rates**
- **Promoting transparency and digitalisation** in the justice delivery system

His appointment reaffirms the commitment to **upholding constitutional values, judicial independence, and social inclusivity** within India's highest court.

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India's Major Ports Set New Benchmark in FY 2024-25

Context: India's **Major Ports** have achieved a **historic performance milestone** in **FY 2024-25**, recording a **cargo handling capacity of approximately 855 million tonnes**, up from **819 million tonnes** in the previous fiscal year. This marks an **annual growth of 4.3%**, showcasing the growing strength and modernization of India's maritime sector.

Key Performance Highlights:

Boost in Operational Efficiency:

- **Average Turnaround Time (TRT)** for vessels has been reduced to **49.5 hours**, a remarkable **48% improvement** from **96 hours** in **FY 2014-15**.
- The **operating ratio** improved significantly, falling from **64.7% to 42.3%**, reflecting greater cost-effectiveness and optimized port operations.

Financial Growth:

- The **total income** of major ports has **more than doubled over the past decade**, recording a **7.5% CAGR** (Compound Annual Growth Rate).
- This financial success is largely attributed to improved port operations and increased private sector involvement.

Private Sector Participation:

- **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) investments** have **tripled**, playing a crucial role in infrastructure upgrades, digitalisation, and innovation across ports.

India's Maritime Sector: A Strategic Asset

- India has **13 Major Ports** (under the central government) and **217 Non-Major Ports** (managed by state governments).
- The sector is overseen by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- Located along some of the **world's busiest trade routes**, India's ports serve as a vital link in global maritime logistics.

Trade and Ranking:

- The sector handles **95% of India's trade by volume** and **70% by value**.
- India's position in the **Global Port Performance Index** improved from **54th in 2014 to 38th in 2023**.
- **Nine Indian ports** now rank among the **top 100 globally** for performance and infrastructure.

Sectoral Growth and Strategic Vision:

Cargo Capacity Growth:

- From **2014-15 to 2023-24**, major ports increased their annual **cargo-handling capacity by over 87%**.

Vision for 2035:

- India aims to invest **US\$ 82 billion** in port infrastructure by 2035.



- Plans include establishing a **national shipping company** to add **1,000 ships** over the next decade to expand fleet capacity and reduce dependence on foreign vessels.

Challenges Hindering Maritime Expansion:

Despite impressive growth, several structural and operational challenges persist:

- Infrastructure Gaps:** Some ports still lack modern facilities, limiting potential throughput.
- Congestion:** Heavy traffic at major ports causes delays and increases turnaround time.
- Environmental Issues:** Emissions and pollution from port activities raise sustainability concerns.
- Inefficient Connectivity:** Poor road and rail links hinder smooth cargo transportation.
- Security and Cyber Threats:** Ports are vulnerable to smuggling, piracy, and cyberattacks due to inadequate security protocols.

Government Initiatives Driving Transformation:

Sagarmala Programme:

- Focuses on **modernising port infrastructure**, enhancing coastal economic zones, and improving port-road-rail connectivity.
- Provides financial support for coastal berths, **fishing harbours**, cruise terminals, and connectivity projects.

Maritime India Vision 2030 (MIV 2030):

- Aims to transform India into a **top-10 global shipbuilding nation**.
- Comprises **150+ initiatives** across sectors like port modernization, shipbuilding, skill development, and logistics.

Inland Waterways Development: 26 new national waterways have been added to promote sustainable and cost-effective transport.

Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP): Targets **100% transition to eco-friendly fuel-based harbour tugs by 2040** to reduce carbon emissions and support the green port initiative.

Sagarmanthan Dialogue: An annual strategic platform positioning India as a **global maritime thought leader**, bringing together policymakers, industry experts, and academia.

Financial Incentives and Support:

- Maritime Development Fund** worth 25,000 crore launched for long-term investment in ports and shipping.
- Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Policy (SBFAP 2.0)** upgraded to make Indian shipyards globally competitive.

The Road Ahead:

India's maritime sector is poised for a **new era of global leadership**, driven by:

- Continued **mechanisation** and **digitalisation** of port processes.
- Expansion of **multi-modal logistics hubs** for seamless cargo flow.
- Promotion of **green and sustainable practices** to meet global environmental standards.

Conclusion: FY 2024-25 stands as a **landmark year** for India's port sector—defined by record-breaking performance, global recognition, and forward-looking reforms. With strategic investments and a strong policy push, India is on course to become a **leading maritime power** in the coming decades.

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4 India's Bold Leap into 6G Technology

Context: India has marked a significant milestone in global telecom leadership. At the **Bharat 6G International Conference**, the **Union Minister of State for Communications** announced that **India is now among the top six countries worldwide** in filing **patents related to 6G technology** — a testament to its rising stature in the high-tech innovation ecosystem.

India's Rising Leadership in 6G Research:

India's 6G push is backed by strategic investments, global partnerships, and deep research capabilities:

- Over **111 government-funded R&D projects** with a total value exceeding **300 crore**.
- International collaborations with tech-advanced nations like **Japan, Finland, and Singapore** to co-develop cutting-edge solutions.
- Breakthroughs in **terahertz communication, AI-native networks**, and **intelligent infrastructure**.
- The economic potential of 6G is immense—expected to contribute up to **US\$1 trillion (~85 lakh crore)** to India's economy by **2035**.



Bharat 6G Vision: A Roadmap to Digital Leadership

The **Bharat 6G Vision**, launched by the Government of India, envisions a **globally competitive, inclusive, and secure digital future**.

Strategic Goals:

- Position India as a **leader in 6G technology** by **2030**.
- Ensure **affordable and scalable access** to 6G networks.
- Bridge the **digital divide** and promote equitable development across all regions.

Two-Phase Development Approach:

1. **R&D Phase (2023–2025):** Focused on core technology development, **network architecture design**, and **pilot testing**.
2. **Deployment Phase (2025–2030):** Aims for **large-scale rollout**, with integration into national digital infrastructure and **support for new-age industries**.

What 6G Brings to the Future:

6G is not just an upgrade—it's a revolution:

- **Sub-millisecond latency:** Enabling real-time control for critical applications like remote surgery and autonomous vehicles.
- **AI-native and self-healing networks:** Offering adaptive and intelligent infrastructure.
- **Volumetric Connectivity:** Extending networks beyond earth to **underwater** and **aerospace realms**.
- **Terahertz Band Communication:** Allowing ultra-high-speed data transfer, thousands of times faster than 5G.

5G vs 6G: What's the Difference?

Feature	5G	6G
Peak Speed	10 Gbps	100 Gbps+
Latency	~1 ms	<0.1 ms
Network Intelligence	Limited AI	Fully AI-native
Coverage	Terrestrial	Air, Sea, Space
Use-Cases	Smart Cities, AR/VR	Holographic Telepresence, Digital Twins, Industrial Automation

Technology Innovation Group on 6G (TIG-6G):

To shape India's 6G trajectory, the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has established the **TIG-6G**, which includes:

- **Top industry players**
- **Premier academic institutions**
- **Leading research organizations**

This body is responsible for drafting the **national 6G roadmap** and formulating policies to keep India at the forefront of telecom innovation.

Spectrum Allocation and Global Coordination:

India is actively participating in international regulatory efforts led by the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**. The **IMT2030** initiative is studying frequency bands for global 6G use:

- **4400–4800 MHz**
- **7125–8400 MHz**
- **14.8–15.35 GHz**

These bands are under evaluation for allocation at the **World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC)** in **2027**.

India has also identified several frequency bands for **IMT (International Mobile Telecommunications)** services, including:

Industry Collaboration and the Bharat 6G Alliance:

To deepen collaboration and build a **robust innovation ecosystem**, India plans to launch the **Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA)**. This initiative will bring together:

- **Startups and industry leaders**
- **Academic and research institutions**
- **Government and private sector stakeholders**

B6GA aims to ensure that India's 6G technologies are **globally competitive, secure, and inclusive**.

India's Global 6G Journey: Looking Ahead

India's push into 6G isn't just about faster networks—it's about **shaping the future of digital civilization**. With strategic vision, global collaboration, and grassroots innovation, India is poised to become a **key driver of 6G development** worldwide.

5

Plastic Menace in the Himalayas: A Growing Ecological Crisis

Context: The pristine Himalayan ecosystem is under increasing threat from **plastic pollution**, with a recent report revealing that **over 84% of plastic waste collected** in the region is **non-recyclable**, raising serious environmental and systemic red flags.



The Himalayan Cleanup 2024: Troubling Findings

The **Himalayan Cleanup (THC) 2024**, an extensive environmental audit conducted across **nine Himalayan states**, exposed alarming statistics:

- Over **1.2 lakh waste items** were examined — **88% were plastic**.
- **84.2% of the plastic waste** was linked to **food and beverage packaging**.
- Shockingly, **71% of this packaging** was **non-recyclable**, single-use plastic.

Top Polluters by Volume:

- **Sikkim and Darjeeling (West Bengal)** ranked highest.
- Followed by **Ladakh, Nagaland, and Uttarakhand**.

Environmental Impact of Plastic Waste in the Himalayas

Tourism-Driven Pollution:

- Plastic waste is concentrated around **tourist hotspots, riverbanks, and protected areas**.
- Unregulated tourism and **lack of sustainable infrastructure** amplify the crisis.

Threat to Climate and Biodiversity:

- Plastic degrades slowly, leading to **soil and water contamination**.
- Disrupts **biodiversity**, damages local **agriculture**, and threatens **water sources**.

Public Health Hazards:

- Improper disposal near habitations causes:
 - **Vector-borne diseases**
 - **Water pollution**
 - **Air toxicity** from open burning of plastic

Systemic Challenges in Himalayan Waste Governance:

Lack of Infrastructure:

- **Mountain villages and towns** lack basic facilities for **waste collection, segregation, and processing**.

Weak Enforcement of Plastic Ban Policies:

- Despite state-level **bans on single-use plastics**, enforcement remains **inconsistent and ineffective**.
- Limited availability of **eco-friendly alternatives** discourages compliance.

Awareness and Responsibility Gaps:

- **Tourists and local businesses** are often unaware of their role in plastic pollution.



- Producers frequently ignore their obligations under **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**.

Topographical & Logistical Barriers:

- Remote terrain, dispersed settlements, and extreme weather** conditions complicate waste management.

India's Initiatives to Curb Plastic Pollution:

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):

- Mandates that **producers and brand owners** manage the lifecycle of plastic products, including post-use collection and recycling.

Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2022:

- Prohibits plastic bags **below 120 microns** in thickness.
- Aims to restrict **manufacture, import, and sale** of low-grade plastic products.

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:

- The nationwide cleanliness campaign includes **plastic waste collection and awareness** drives.

Plastic Parks Scheme:

- Dedicated zones for **plastic recycling and processing**, promoting a **circular economy** approach.

The Way Forward: Towards Sustainable Waste Solutions

1. Mountain-Sensitive Waste Policies:

- Design policies that respect **geographical, cultural, and ecological** realities.
- Incentivize **eco-alternatives** suitable for cold and remote terrains.

2. Decentralized Waste Management:

- Promote **community-led initiatives** using **traditional ecological knowledge**.
- Set up **low-cost, modular waste processing units** across villages.

3. Eco-Friendly Tourism Practices:

- Implement **mandatory waste audits** at tourist sites.
- Enforce **carry-in, carry-out policies**, especially around **pilgrimage routes** and **rivers**.

Did You Know?

- Plastic takes 500–1,000 years** to decompose in cold environments like the Himalayas.
- Microplastics** have now been found in **glacial meltwater**, threatening **Himalayan river systems** that sustain over a **billion people downstream**.

India stands at a critical juncture to **preserve the fragile Himalayan ecosystem**. By combining **policy innovation, community engagement, and eco-conscious tourism**, the nation can lead by example in tackling mountain plastic pollution before it becomes irreversible.

6

Colombia Joins China's Belt and Road Initiative

Context: China and Colombia have officially signed a **Belt and Road cooperation pact**, marking a significant step in strengthening diplomatic and economic ties between Asia's largest economy and one of South America's most strategically located nations.

This move aligns Colombia with China's ambitious **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, a global infrastructure and investment strategy aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and trade across continents.

About Colombia: A Strategic South American Nation

Capital: **Bogotá**

Geographical Location:

Situated in the **northwestern region of South America**, Colombia enjoys a **unique strategic position** as the only South American country with coastlines on **both the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean**.

Political Borders:

Colombia shares its borders with:

- **Panama** to the northwest
- **Ecuador** and **Peru** to the south
- **Venezuela** to the east
- **Brazil** to the southeast

Geographical Highlights:

- The **Andes Mountains** stretch across its western territory, shaping much of its landscape and climate.
- The **Amazon rainforest** covers the southeastern regions, contributing to its rich biodiversity.
- Home to the **Magdalena River**, Colombia's main waterway that supports inland trade.

Natural Wealth and Resources:

Colombia is endowed with a wealth of **natural resources**, making it an attractive partner for international trade and investment:

- **Petroleum** and **natural gas**
- **Coal** and **iron ore**
- **Nickel, copper, and gold**
- World-renowned for **emeralds**, with some of the finest quality stones globally
- Strong **hydropower potential**, providing over **two-thirds of the country's electricity**

Why This Partnership Matters:

- **Colombia's inclusion in the BRI** strengthens China's economic footprint in **Latin America**, a region increasingly influenced by Chinese trade, finance, and infrastructure development.
- It opens up potential Chinese investment in **Colombian infrastructure, energy, mining, and digital connectivity**.





- Colombia could gain better access to **Asian markets**, advanced technology, and diversified development financing options.

Did You Know?

- Colombia is one of the world's **top five producers of emeralds**, accounting for over **70% of global supply**.
- The country has **more bird species than any other nation**, making it a global biodiversity hotspot.

This strategic cooperation under the **Belt and Road Initiative** is expected to enhance **bilateral economic development**, boost **connectivity**, and foster **greater geopolitical alignment** between **China and Latin America**.

