DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 17-05-2025

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1. **Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021**

GS-2

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Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021

Syllabus: GS-1: Population Geography.

Context:

> Recently, The Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021, released by the Registrar General of India.

Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2021

Key Demographic Indicators (2021)

> **Crude Birth Rate (CBR):** 19.3 (↓ from 19.5 in 2020)

> > o *Lowest:* Kerala (12.9)

> > o *Highest:* Bihar (25.6)

> **Crude Death Rate (CDR):** 7.5

> > o *Highest:* Chhattisgarh (10.1)

> > o *Lowest:* Delhi (5.4)

> **Infant Mortality Rate (IMR):** 27 per 1,000 live births

> > o *Best:* Kerala (6)

> > o *Worst:* Madhya Pradesh (41)

> **Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR):** 31

> > o *Best:* Kerala (8)

> > o *Improved female U5MR* by 2 points

> **Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR):** 19 (↓ from 26 in 2014)

> **Sex Ratio at Birth:** 913 females per 1,000 males (↑ from 899 in 2014)

> > o *Best:* Kerala (962)

> > o *Worst:* Uttarakhand (852)

> **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** 2.0 (↓ from 2.3 in 2014)

> > o *Well below replacement level:* Delhi & West Bengal (1.4)

> **Medical Attention at Delivery:** 91.1%

➢ **Medical Attention Before Death:** Only 39.3% received it

Positives:

➢ **Fertility Decline and Population Stabilization**

    o National TFR of 2.0 suggests India is approaching the replacement level of fertility (2.1).

    o Urban TFR already at 1.6, indicating demographic transition.

➢ **Improved Maternal and Child Health**

    o IMR and U5MR show significant declines, thanks to expanded immunization, institutional deliveries, and maternal health programs.

➢ **Progress in Gender Equity**

    o Sex ratio at birth improving (913 in 2021), reflecting growing success of initiatives like *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*.

➢ **Achievement of SDG Targets**

    o 8 States met MMR SDG goals.

    o 12 States met U5MR targets.

    o 6 States achieved NMR goals.

➢ **Global Performance**

    o U5MR reduced by 78% since 1990, surpassing global average as per UN estimates.

Negatives:

➢ **Persisting Inter-State Disparities**

    o Bihar (TFR: 3.0), MP (IMR: 41) show inadequate health access and lag in demographic transition.

➢ **Slow Progress in High-Fertility States**

    o States like Bihar, UP, Rajasthan show less than 1% annual reduction in birth rate.

➢ **Low Pre-Death Medical Attention**

    o Only 39.3% received medical attention before death, indicating poor end-of-life and emergency care, especially in rural and poor households.

- ➢ **Urban-Rural Divide**

  - o Rural TFR remains at 2.2 vs. urban 1.6 – reflects gap in education, access to family planning, and socio-economic behavior.

- ➢ **Uttarakhand Outlier**

  - o Only state showing a rise in birth rate – contrary to national trend, needing state-specific investigation.

Way Forward:

- ➢ **Targeted Family Planning Interventions**

  - o Behavioural change, increased access to contraceptives, and financial incentives in high TFR states like Bihar and UP.

- ➢ **Strengthen Rural Healthcare Systems**

  - o Invest in infrastructure, skilled personnel, maternal-child care services, and digital tracking in remote areas.

- ➢ **Expand Palliative and Emergency Services**

  - o Ensure pre-death medical attention through mobile health units and last-mile health coverage.

- ➢ **Sustain Gender Equity Efforts**

  - o Strengthen girl child education, anti-discrimination campaigns, and schemes promoting girl child welfare.

- ➢ **Leverage Technology and Data Analytics**

  - o Use AI and digital tools (e.g., real-time maternal tracking) for responsive and preventive health governance.

Conclusion:

The SRS 2021 Report highlights **India's commendable progress** toward population stabilization and better health outcomes, especially in maternal and child care. However, **regional imbalances** and **urban-rural health divides** persist. Bridging these gaps with **targeted, tech-driven, and equity-focused interventions** can make India a **model of inclusive demographic transition**.

Right to Digital Access

Syllabus: GS-2: Fundamental Rights – Article 21.

Context:

On April 30, the Supreme Court (SC) directed revisions to Know-Your-Customer (KYC) digital norms to ensure accessibility for 'persons with disabilities' (PwD), reinterpreting Article 21 of the Constitution to encompass the 'right to digital access'.

Right to Digital Access

What It Is

The **Right to Digital Access** refers to the **guaranteed ability of all citizens**, including **persons with disabilities (PwDs)** and the **marginalized**, to **access and benefit from digital public and financial infrastructure**.

The **Supreme Court** has reinterpreted **Article 21** (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) to include **digital accessibility**, especially due to growing reliance on online verification, governance, and welfare delivery.

Issues Surrounding Right to Digital Access

- **Exclusion in KYC Systems**
  - Tasks like blinking, selfie capture, OTPs exclude **visually impaired** and **facially disfigured** persons.

- **Non-Compliance with Accessibility Standards**
  - KYC apps often lack **screen readers**, **audio prompts**, or **alternative verification modes**.

- **Denial of Basic Services**
  - Inaccessible digital systems deny **banking, telecom, pensions, welfare** to PwDs.

- **Discriminatory Design**
  - Lack of **universal design** violates **Section 42 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**.

- **Widening Digital Divide**
  - Affects not just PwDs but also **rural citizens, senior citizens, and linguistic minorities**.

Supreme Court Judgment: *Pragya Prasun & Amar Jain v. Union of India (2025)*

➢ Held that **digital inclusion is a constitutional right**, not a discretionary policy matter.

➢ Invoked **Articles 14, 15, 21, and 38**:

  o Digital infrastructure must be **inclusive, accessible, and non-discriminatory**.

Key Directions of the SC

➢ Reform **KYC norms**:

  o Introduce **alternative modes of live verification**.

  o Appoint **Digital Accessibility Nodal Officers**.

  o Conduct **periodic accessibility audits**.

➢ Mandated **PwD user testing** during app/portal development.

➢ Ruled that **visual input-based verification** violates the **dignity of blind users and acid attack survivors**.

Significance of the Judgment

➢ **Constitutional Recognition of Digital Inclusion**

  o Establishes digital access as a **fundamental right**.

➢ **Strengthens Disability Rights**

  o Reinforces India's obligations under **UNCRPD** and **RPwD Act, 2016**.

➢ **Inclusive Digital Transformation**

  o Ensures **tech solutions** are designed with **equity**.

➢ **Boost to Accessible Governance**

  o Improves access to **e-governance, education, health, and finance** for marginalized groups.

➢ **Promotes Substantive Equality**

  o Goes beyond formal equality to ensure **real, structural reform** in digital delivery systems.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's judgment marks a **paradigm shift** by recognizing **digital access as intrinsic to Article 21**.

It **compels governments and private entities** to treat accessibility as a **legal right**, not a technical afterthought.

Bridging the digital divide is now a constitutional **obligation**—essential to **ensuring dignity, equity, and justice** for all citizens.

Biometric E-Passports

Syllabus: GS-2: e-Governance.

Context:

➢ India has recently launched biometric e-passports, joining over 120 countries.

Biometric E-Passports in India: A Modern Travel Milestone

What is an E-Passport?

➢ A **biometric e-passport** is a traditional passport enhanced with a **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip**.

➢ Stores **personal** and **biometric data** (fingerprints and facial recognition).

➢ A **gold symbol** on the cover indicates its electronic capabilities.

➢ Features **Basic Access Control (BAC)** and **Extended Access Control (EAC)** to encrypt sensitive data.

Rollout Timeline

➢ Part of **Passport Seva Programme 2.0**.

➢ **Pilot launch:** April 2024 in cities like **Nagpur** and **Chennai**.

➢ **Full-scale issuance began** in **Tamil Nadu by March 2025**, with **over 20,700 e-passports** issued by March 22.

Benefits of E-Passports

➢ Enables **contactless verification** at immigration counters.

➢ Reduces **wait times**, **manual inspections**, and enhances **travel efficiency**.

➢ Strengthens **border security** and **curbs identity fraud**.

Global Standards and Credibility

➢ Complies with **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** guidelines.

➢ Enhances India's global travel credibility.

➢ Aligns India with **120+ countries** already using biometric passports.

Application Process

➢ Apply via the **Passport Seva Portal**.

  o Create account → Fill application → Pay fees → Book appointment.

➢ All biometric e-passports are **manufactured in India**.

➢ Supports **Make in India** and ensures **data sovereignty**.

Significance in the Global Context

➢ Post-pandemic world saw **1.5+ billion international arrivals in 2023**.

➢ Biometric passports provide a secure way to manage **high passenger volumes**.

➢ Critical for preventing **forgery**, **impersonation**, and **data tampering**.

Future Prospects

➢ Upcoming developments may include:

  o Mobile passport wallets.

  o Blockchain-based identity verification.

  o Integration with Aadhaar and DigiLocker.

➢ Vision: A **paperless, intelligent, seamless travel experience**.

Conclusion

India's transition to biometric e-passports marks a major step in **modernising international travel**, **strengthening security**, and **enhancing the global mobility** of its citizens.

UN Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee

Syllabus: GS-2: International Organisations.

Context:

India aims to present evidence to the UN Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee, denoting TRF's connections to Pakistan-based terror groups.

India's Push to Designate The Resistance Front (TRF) as a Terrorist Organisation

Background

➢ **Incident Trigger**: A recent deadly **terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir**, resulting in **26 fatalities**, has intensified India's diplomatic efforts.

➢ **Objective**: India aims to formally designate *The Resistance Front (TRF)* as a terrorist entity under the **UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee**.

The Resistance Front (TRF)

➢ **Formation**: Emerged in **2019**, shortly after the **abrogation of Article 370** in J&K.

➢ **Alleged Affiliations**: Widely considered a **front for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**, a UN-designated terrorist organization based in Pakistan.

➢ **Modus Operandi**:

o Involved in **targeted killings**, **arms trafficking**, and **militant recruitment**.

o Operates under the **guise of a local Kashmiri group** to deflect international scrutiny.

o Uses **digital channels** for recruitment and propaganda.

India's Dossier Submission

➢ India is preparing a **comprehensive dossier** for the **UNSC 1267 Committee**, including:

o Intelligence reports

o Digital forensic evidence

o Investigative findings

➢ Aim: To expose TRF's **terrorist activities** and **operational links to Pakistan-based networks**.

➢ Allegation: TRF is **recruiting Kashmiri youth**, further destabilizing the region.

UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee

➢ **Established**: In **1999** to target entities linked to **Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and associated groups**.

➢ **Sanctions Imposed**:

  o Travel bans

  o Asset freezes

  o Arms embargoes

➢ **Purpose of Listing**: To **restrict the operational and financial capabilities** of terrorist entities.

Listing Process and Challenges

➢ A **member state (India)** submits a proposal backed with evidence.

➢ **Unanimous consensus** from all **15 UNSC members** is required.

➢ **Challenges**:

  o **Geopolitical factors** and **strategic alliances** influence decisions.

  o **China** and **Pakistan** have historically used procedural tactics to delay or block listings.

Past Precedent

➢ The case of **Masood Azhar (Jaish-e-Mohammed)**:

  o India's proposals were **repeatedly blocked by China**.

  o Only after **intense diplomatic lobbying**, Masood Azhar was listed in **2019**.

TRF's Activities and Operational Tactics

➢ Implicated in **multiple violent incidents** in Kashmir.

➢ **Initial Claim**: TRF claimed responsibility for the **Pahalgam attack**.

➢ **Retraction**: The retraction indicates **external influence**, possibly from handlers in Pakistan.

➢ Uses **online platforms** for communication and indoctrination.

Diplomatic Efforts & Geopolitical Hurdles

➢ India is pushing at multilateral forums for **global recognition of TRF as a terrorist group**.

➢ **Pakistan and China** continue to resist references to TRF in UNSC statements.

➢ Raises concerns over **Pakistan's alleged state sponsorship** of such groups.

Conclusion

India's push to label TRF as a UN-designated terrorist organization is part of its broader counterterrorism diplomacy. While legal and evidentiary standards are being met through the dossier, **geopolitical resistance**—especially from **China and Pakistan**—poses significant roadblocks. Nevertheless, India's consistent advocacy underscores its commitment to **counter cross-border terrorism** and seek **global accountability**.

World Press Freedom Index

Syllabus: GS-2: Governance - Freedom of Press.

Context:

India's position on the World Press Freedom Index has seen a notable improvement in 2025. The country ranked 151st among 180 nations, rising from 159th in the previous year. This change reflects ongoing efforts to enhance media freedom despite challenges.

India's Position in 2025

➢ **Rank**: 151 out of 180 countries (an improvement from **159** in 2024).

➢ **Significance**: Reflects efforts to enhance **media freedom** despite ongoing challenges.

About the World Press Freedom Index

➢ **Published by**: *Reporters Without Borders (RSF)*.

➢ **Basis of Evaluation**:

  o Inputs from **5,000+ individuals** (journalists, academics, policymakers).

  o Assesses **political, economic, legal, social, and safety-related conditions** affecting press freedom.

Top and Bottom Countries

➢ **Top 3**:

  1. Norway

  2. Estonia

3. Netherlands
   Reasons: Strong legal safeguards, independent media, press diversity.

> **Bottom 3**:

1. Eritrea (last)

2. North Korea

3. China
   Reasons: Severe censorship, government control, repression of dissent.

Challenges to Global Press Freedom

> **Economic Pressures**: Threaten financial viability of independent media.

> **Political Instability**: Especially in **Palestine** and **Tunisia**.

> **Media Ownership Concentration**: Leads to lack of diversity, promotes self-censorship.

India's Media Landscape

> **Size**: Over **900 TV channels**, **140,000+ publications**.

> **Positives**: Diverse and dynamic.

> **Challenges**:

   o Political influence.

   o Threats to journalists.

   o Legal restrictions.

Factors Affecting Rankings

> **Political control** or influence.

> **Economic sustainability** of independent media.

> **Legal environment** (freedom vs censorship).

> **Ownership patterns**.

> **Safety of journalists**.

Editorial Independence vs Economic Survival

> News outlets globally face a **dilemma**:

   o Stay editorially independent vs.

    o   Survive financially under commercial/political pressure.

Future Outlook

> **Fragile Global Scenario**: Political and economic threats persist.

> **Hope Lies in**:

    o   Strong legal protections.

    o   Media pluralism.

    o   Support for journalistic freedom.