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THE HINDU COMPLETE ANALYSIS

Current Affairs & Editorial



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THE HINDU COMPLETE ANALYSIS · 25 JUNE 2026

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1

PACOM — The Deeper Meaning Behind a Dropped Prefix

GS 2 · International Relations

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WHY IN NEWS

The US Department of War has restored the name of its largest combatant command from **US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM)** back to **US Pacific Command (USPACOM)**, reverting a 2018 change. Though seemingly cosmetic, the move signals a possible recalibration of US strategy in Asia that bears on India's strategic calculus.

- In **2018**, then US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis renamed PACOM to INDOPACOM as a recognition of the “growing significance” of the **Indian Ocean, the Indian subcontinent and India itself**; “Asia-Pacific” gave way to “Indo-Pacific”.
- Reverting the name can be read as the diminishing salience of the **Quad** (India, Japan, Australia, US) — a grouping Beijing derides as an “exclusive clique” or “ocean foam”.
- The shift coincides with a thaw in **US–China** ties: a Trump visit to Beijing (May 2026) and a planned Xi Jinping visit to the US, with Washington seen to be “tiptoeing” around the Taiwan issue.
- References to a “**G-2**” (US–China condominium) hint at a possible recasting of the world into **spheres of influence**, with China as the predominant Asian power — contrary to India's vision of a **multipolar Asia**.
- The **US National Defense Strategy (Jan 2026)** does not mention the Quad even once; its agenda is pared to four areas — maritime security, economic prosperity, critical & emerging minerals/technology, and disaster response.

USPACOM — PRELIMS SNAPSHOT

Established	1 January 1947, by US President Harry S. Truman
Status	Oldest & largest of the six US geographic combatant commands
Headquarters	Hawaii
Area of Responsibility	~Half the earth's surface — US west coast to India's western border; Antarctica to the North Pole
Name history	PACOM → INDOPACOM (May 2018) → PACOM (2026)

PACOM, the deeper meaning behind a dropped prefix

The decision by the United States military to change the name of its naval command in the region from "US Indo-Pacific Command" to "US PACOM" – United States Indo-Pacific Command to United States Pacific Command – reverting to its original name that was changed in 2018 can be dismissed as superficial, even trivial. Many have already responded with the Shakespearean "What's in a name?", even as the U.S. Department of War pointed out that US PACOM's area of responsibility, from "the waters off the West Coast of the United States to the western border of India" or what had once been described as "Hollywood to Bollywood, from polar bears to penguins", has never changed. In 2018, U.S. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said that the name INDOPACOM was a recognition of the "growing significance" of the Indian Ocean, the Indian subcontinent, and India itself, and the U.S. dropped the term "Asia-Pacific" to "Indo-Pacific".

Current U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth gave the signal, on May 30, that this understanding has now changed, at his speech at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore – compared to more than 30 references to the "Indo-Pacific" in his speech in 2025, his speech this year contained not a single reference to the Indo-Pacific region or strategy.

Given the centre stage that the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific policy has had in India's strategic calculus since 2018, it is necessary, therefore, to go beyond the superficial to the subterranean or submarine, in this case. New Delhi must study how broader trends in U.S. policy are attempting to recast both the region and India's position within it in terms of three broader geographies.

U.S.-China ties and the Quad

The first, is the U.S.'s outreach to China, and concurrently diminishing salience of the Quad (India, Japan, Australia, the U.S.), which Beijing has always protested as an "exclusive clique" or derisively as "ocean foam". In the long term, the U.S. and China cannot shy away from the fierce rivalry between them, but it is clear that in the immediate term, Trump 2.0 has decided to play nice.

U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing in May 2026 and Chinese President Xi Jinping's upcoming visit to the U.S. on September 24, indicate that the two sides do not want their differences to overcome the relationship, and the U.S. is tiptoeing around the Taiwan issue. Mr. Trump's references to a "G-2", including during a press availability with Mr. Modi on the sidelines of the 52nd G-7 summit in France (June 15 to 17), are an early warning of a plan to recast the world into "spheres of influence", where China would be the predominant power in the continent, not as one pole in a multipolar Asia, as India envisions.

As a result, the Quad, rebuilt in Trump 1.0 as a



Suhasini Haidar

counter to China in the region, appears to be floundering. The U.S.'s National Defense Strategy released in January 2026 does not mention the Quad even once. In terms of substance, the Quad's combined agenda has been pared down to four areas of cooperation – maritime security, economic prosperity, critical and emerging minerals technology and disaster responses. Even within these limited objectives, there have been setbacks, such as over Artificial Intelligence cooperation. Despite Quad countries signing on to Pax Silica, and Critical Minerals Initiative Framework with the U.S., the Trump administration ordered Anthropic to end access to its latest models for all non-Americans.

Another question concerns the Quad Summit, which India has unsuccessfully sought to host since January 2024. During U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio's visit to Delhi in May 2026, he offered no firm commitment that Mr. Trump would visit Delhi this year, amid indications that the Quad may be relegated to a Foreign Ministers' level grouping. The U.S. Navy's reported actions involving Iranian ship *IRIS Dena* (March 2006) and recent attacks on three ships in which three Indians were killed underscore maritime security and domain awareness concerns within the Quad framework. In July, when he hosts Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and travels to Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand, Prime Minister Narendra Modi must discuss alternative maritime coalitions and revive the Australia-India-Japan trilateral.

The U.S.-Iran MoU and West Asia

The second geography of concern is West Asia. The U.S. ceasefire with Iran, after just a few months of a surprisingly badly planned war, is indicative of a general fatigue in Trump 2.0 with U.S. friends and allies in the region. The situation is even more volatile today than it was prior to February 28, especially given the short shrift Israel has received in negotiations with Iran, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's defiance over the ceasefire for Lebanon.

A closer look at the 14-paragraph "Islamabad MoU" released by Iran reveals several signals for the region. Paragraph one states that the U.S. commits to "remove its forces from the proximity of the Islamic Republic of Iran" within 30 days after the final deal. Paragraph five says that, after the Hormuz Strait is demined, Iran and Oman will define the Strait's future administration in consultation with Persian Gulf littoral states.

Paragraph 6 stipulates that the U.S., along with regional allies, will provide at least \$300 billion for Iran's reconstruction. These provisions imply commitments on behalf of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) states while giving Iran leverage on key issues – military, connectivity, and economic security. Oman and Qatar are now closer to Iran than

before and have been part of the Pakistan-led mediation process, while countries such as Saudi Arabia are seeking new security arrangements with Türkiye, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

India's policy towards the region requires a rapid revision in light of the post-war, post-deal power structure. What was once a finely balanced approach now appears tilted towards Israel and the United Arab Emirates. New Delhi must also urgently reconsider its compliance with U.S. sanctions on Iranian oil and the Chabahar port, given Washington's shifting positions.

The U.S. and South Asia

Finally, India must study the implications of U.S. foreign policy decisions in its neighbourhood.

The appointment of Sergio Gorrer as both U.S. Ambassador to India and Special Envoy for South and Central Asia signals Washington's growing regional ambitions. New Delhi has pushed back on attempts by the U.S. to become a supra entity in South Asia, as well as its efforts to resolve intra-regional conflicts between India and Pakistan. This ambition was hinted at during Operation Sindoor (May 2025), and repeated by Mr. Trump over the past year, especially as he met the Pakistani leadership many times in this period.

Mr. Gorrer's recent travels to Kathmandu, Thimphu, Dhaka and Colombo indicate that the U.S. is keen to broaden its efforts across the region. In the absence of effective pan-regional frameworks such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) – both are constrained by New Delhi's political tensions with Islamabad and Dhaka – it is clear that the U.S. is entering into competition with China for influence in South Asia.

Beijing has already built several mechanisms for cooperation with South Asia, and both powers side-stepping India. India, as chair of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, and with Mr. Modi due to attend the planned BIMSTEC summit in Bangladesh and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Pakistan next year, has an opportunity to reassess its regional leadership. Given the opportunities, a revival of the SAARC grouping and other pan-regional initiatives must be considered.

Concerns over the U.S.'s moves across India's geographies may seem contrary to the bonhomie at the Modi-Trump meeting at the G-7 meet in France, and the red carpet for Mr. Rubio's India visit. Shorn of the rhetoric, however, the trends in U.S. policy are clear, and New Delhi must plan accordingly, acknowledging that the shifts run far deeper than the ripples on the surface caused by a dropped prefix.

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Source: *The Hindu* — 'PACOM, the deeper meaning behind a dropped prefix' (Suhasini Haidar)

WEST ASIA SPILLOVER & WHY IT MATTERS FOR INDIA

- A reported **US–Iran MoU** implies the US (with allies) may back at least **\$300 billion** for Iran's reconstruction; **Oman and Qatar** move closer to Iran while **Saudi Arabia** seeks new ties with Türkiye, Pakistan and Ukraine.
- India's once-balanced West Asia policy now appears tilted towards **Israel and the UAE**; New Delhi may need to reconsider compliance with US sanctions on **Iranian oil and the Chabahar port**.
- **Way forward:** revive alternative maritime coalitions (India-Australia-Japan trilateral), deepen issue-based minilaterals, and retain **strategic autonomy** on energy and connectivity.

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 2** **IR:** Bilateral, regional & global groupings involving India — QUAD, Indo-Pacific, India–US ties.
- GS 2** Effect of policies of developed countries (US–China) on India's interests; multipolarity.
- STATIC** US Unified Combatant Commands; SAGAR doctrine; IORA; Chabahar & INSTC connectivity.

2

Viksit and Surakshit — The Cost of Inaction on Safety

GS 3 · Disaster Management

Fire Safety & Governance

The Hindu · Editorial

WHY IN NEWS

A fire at a Lucknow coaching-cum-commercial building killed **15 people**, mostly students, and injured five — the latest in a summer of fire accidents. The editorial argues recurring fires are a **governance failure**, not merely an emergency-response gap, and that a **Viksit Bharat must also be a Surakshit Bharat**.

- The tragedy reflects the perils of aspirational India: a booming **coaching/education economy** riding on unplanned urban growth and regulatory failure.
- Many coaching centres operate **outside formal regulatory frameworks**; the building was reportedly **not authorised for commercial use** yet escaped demolition despite repeated notices.
- Per the FIR, neither owners nor businesses had made **adequate fire-safety provisions** — violations common where commercial and educational establishments ignore basic norms.
- Official explanations routinely end with “**electrical fire**”, which conceals more than it reveals. Real causes include **overloaded circuits, harmonic currents** creating hotspots, poor wiring, and the absence of **arc-fault protection devices**.
- India suffers from **inadequate firefighting infrastructure** and a shortage of trained **fire-forensics experts** for rigorous root-cause analysis — so lessons from each disaster remain limited.
- Many buildings lack the **mandatory fire detection and suppression systems** standard in developed countries; a nationwide scientifically-designed **sample survey of building safety** could guide reform.

Viksit and Surakshit

The cost of inaction on safety issues is more than that of enforcement

The Lucknow fire, which killed 15 people, mostly students, and injured five others, captures both the promise and the perils of aspirational India. It reflects a booming education economy built around a growing services sector, but also the unplanned urban growth and regulatory failures that often accompany it. India's young population, eager to acquire skills and improve economic prospects, has fuelled an ecosystem of coaching centres and training institutes, many of which operate outside formal regulatory frameworks, require low capital investment and generate high profits. As advances in artificial intelligence threaten to reshape employment patterns and formal educational institutions struggle to keep pace with skill requirements, such centres are likely to proliferate. The three-storey building where the fire occurred was reportedly not authorised for commercial use, yet it escaped demolition despite repeated notices. According to the FIR by the civic authorities, neither the owners nor the businesses operating there had made adequate provisions for fire safety. Such violations are common across India, where commercial and educational establishments have little regard for basic safety norms.

The Lucknow incident is also part of a disturbing pattern. This summer has witnessed a succes-

The Lucknow incident is also part of a disturbing pattern. This summer has witnessed a succession of major fire accidents across the country. Public attention usually focuses on administrative negligence, and official explanations frequently end with the phrase “electrical fire” – a description that often conceals more than it reveals. Electrical fires can arise from several identifiable causes, including overloaded circuits caused by growing use of appliances, harmonic currents generated by sophisticated equipment that create localised hotspots, poor-quality wiring, and the absence of arc-fault protection devices. Understanding these causes is key to preventing similar tragedies. This requires a stronger culture of investigation. India suffers from inadequate firefighting infrastructure and a shortage of trained fire-forensics experts capable of conducting rigorous root-cause analyses and recommending systemic remedies. Without such expertise, lessons from each disaster remain limited. The challenge therefore demands a national response. India's ambition of becoming a developed nation cannot be separated from the imperative of ensuring public safety. Yet, many buildings lack mandatory fire detection and suppression systems that are standard in developed countries. A Viksit Bharat must also be a Surakshit Bharat. A nationwide assessment of building safety, even through a scientifically designed sample survey, would provide valuable data for reform. The task may be large, but the human and economic costs of inaction are far greater.

Source: The Hindu — ‘Viksit and Surakshit’ editorial.

LINK TO THE FRAMEWORK

Nodal body	National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA); fire services are a State subject
Model law	Model Bill on Maintenance of Fire & Emergency Services
Coaching norms	MoE Guidelines for Regulation of Coaching Centres, 2024
Core idea	“A Viksit Bharat must also be a Surakshit Bharat”

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 3** **Disaster Management:** man-made disasters, vulnerability & risk reduction, mitigation.
- GS 2** Development & management of the social sector — regulation of coaching/education.
- STATIC** Disaster Management Act, 2005; NDMA; National Building Code; NBC fire-safety norms.

3

Razor's Edge — High Heat, Low Rainfall Threaten Produce

GS 3 · Agriculture & Economy

Monsoon & El Niño

The Hindu · Editorial

WHY IN NEWS

The nationwide **southwest monsoon deficit has widened from 35% to 43%**, the winds' advance stalled near Mumbai, and both the US NOAA and the IMD expect a **moderate-to-strong El Niño** this year — raising risks for the kharif season and food inflation.

- **El Niño** suppresses the vertical air movement needed for rainclouds while a warming Pacific weakens moisture-bearing trade winds; the **Madden-Julian Oscillation** is unfavourable and the **Indian Ocean Dipole** offers no buffer.
- Rainfall is uneven: northwest India is **+5%**, but central India and the northeast face deficits of **63% and 43%**. With two-thirds of seasonal rain due in July–August, recovery is still possible.
- Reservoir storage at **30.4%** (vs 25.1% in previous El Niño years) means no alarm yet — but agriculture is more exposed.
- The Agriculture Ministry has prioritised **111 of 315 vulnerable districts**. Extreme heat is cutting farm-labour productivity and has hit the **cardamom harvest in Idukki** and other Western Ghats plantation crops.
- The **kharif** window (rice, pulses, oilseeds) and **fertiliser availability** (Chinese export curbs + West Asia tensions) are under pressure. Retail food inflation was **4.2%** in April; further deficits threaten vegetables and pulses.

WAY FORWARD

- Shift from **rain-centric to water-centric** organisation; cut dependence on water-intensive crops; use adjustable sowing windows and alternative seeds — with the key being **implementation at scale**.
- Create a **new authority** to coordinate inter-State water use and cropping on extended El Niño forecasts, ending fragmentation between the Agriculture and Jal Shakti Ministries and the IMD.

Razor's edge

High heat and low rainfall is threatening agricultural produce

The southwest monsoon deficit nationwide has increased from 35% to 43%; the winds' northward advance was stalled near Mumbai; and both the U.S. NOAA and the India Meteorological Department (IMD) expect a moderate-to-strong El Niño this year. The El Niño suppresses the vertical air movement needed for rainclouds to form while a warming Pacific is weakening the trade winds that bring moisture to the subcontinent. The Madden-Julian Oscillation is also in an unfavourable phase and the Indian Ocean Dipole currently cannot offer a buffer. Further, while northwest India has received 5% more rain than normal, central India and the northeast face deficits of 63% and 43%, respectively. But with two-thirds of the seasonal rainfall historically arriving in July and August, the monsoon may still recover and salvage the season. Together with reservoir storage at 30.4% of capacity, compared with 25.1% during previous El Niño years, there is no reason for alarm yet. However, the effects for agriculture are more concerning. The Agriculture Ministry has already prioritised 111 districts out of 315 vulnerable ones based on their irrigation coverage. Extreme heat has been reducing farm labour productivity. High heat and rain shortfall have sown anxiety over the cardamom harvest in Idukki, a fate that bodes ill for other plantation crops in the Western Ghats.

Both the *kharif* sowing window for rice, pulses, and oilseeds and the availability of fertilizers could come under pressure, the latter due to Chinese export curbs and tensions in West Asia, heightening the risks of lower soil moisture and higher input stress. Retail food inflation was 4.2% in April; further deficits will especially threaten vegetables and pulses, complicating the monetary policy. The fundamental problem is the way India has built its rural economy around the assumption of reliable rainfall delivery. No adaptation strategy can indefinitely outpace unchecked warming, so limiting future warming should amount to reducing the extent of exposure. The ideal sustainable strategies are to switch from rain-centric to water-centric organisation, reduce dependence on water-intensive crops, and improve resilience. Pathways for the first two have already been outlined. On the last, while the Agriculture Ministry's extant contingency plans reflect the need for adjustable sowing windows and alternative seed varieties, the principal variable remains implementation at scale. Second, the government should consider a new authority to coordinate inter-State water use and cropping changes based on extended El Niño forecasts, eliminating the cropping governance currently fragmented between the Agriculture and Jal Shakti Ministries, and the IMD.

Source: *The Hindu* — 'Razor's edge' editorial on monsoon & agriculture.

CLIMATE DRIVERS — PRELIMS POINTERS

El Niño	Warming of central/eastern Pacific; suppresses Indian monsoon
IOD	Indian Ocean Dipole; positive phase aids monsoon
MJO	Madden-Julian Oscillation; eastward-moving rain pulse
Reservoir storage	30.4% of capacity (vs 25.1% in past El Niño years)
Food inflation	4.2% (April)

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 1** **Geography:** Indian monsoon mechanism; ENSO, El Niño/La Niña, IOD, MJO; climatic phenomena.
- GS 3** Cropping patterns (*kharif/rabi*); food security; climate change & agriculture; irrigation.
- STATIC** Drought management; PM-KISAN/PMFBY; reservoir & water-resource management.

4

Clearing the Road to Timely Trauma Care in India

GS 2 · Polity & Health

Right to Life / Art. 21

The Hindu · Op-Ed

WHY IN NEWS

On **26 May 2026**, the Supreme Court held in *SaveLIFE Foundation vs Union of India* that the **right to trauma care is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21**, issuing nine binding directions to the Union, States and UTs with timelines of three to six months.

- The right extends from the **site of injury to definitive hospital treatment** — covering the whole chain: bystander, emergency call, ambulance, paramedic and receiving facility.
- Around **4.67 lakh Indians** die yearly from injuries (NCRB); **road crashes alone cause ~1.77 lakh deaths**. Trauma is the leading cause of death among Indians aged **18–45**.
- The **Law Commission (201st Report)** estimated half of road-crash fatalities are preventable with timely care; a **2021 NITI Aayog-AIIMS report** found at least 30% of deaths are linked to delays.
- India does not lack policies; it has lacked a **uniform, enforceable trauma-care framework**. The judgment imposes a **positive obligation** on the State to build an integrated trauma response system.

A COOPERATIVE-FEDERALISM APPROACH

- Public health, hospitals and ambulances fall under the **State List** (Seventh Schedule), making Union–State cooperation essential. Affidavits filed by **34 States/UTs** signalled willingness to standardise care.
- The directions give **judicial backing** to existing frameworks — **PM RAHAT**, the **National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)**, **ERSS-112**, the EMT curriculum, Good Samaritan Rules and the Health Ministry’s trauma-care guidelines.

Clearing the road to timely trauma care in India

On May 26, 2026, the Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark judgment with implications for public health policy. Hearing a writ petition filed by SaveLIFE Foundation in October 2024, a Bench of Justices J.K. Maheshwari and Atul S. Chandurkar, in *SaveLIFE Foundation & Anr. vs Union of India & Ors.*, held that the right to trauma care is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court ruled that this right extends from the site of injury to definitive hospital treatment and issued nine binding directions to the Union, States and Union Territories, with implementation timelines ranging from three to six months.

Around 4.67 lakh Indians die every year from injuries such as road crashes, falls, burns, drowning, industrial mishaps, fires and disasters, according to National Crime Records Bureau data. Road crashes alone account for nearly 1.77 lakh deaths. Trauma is the leading cause of death among Indians aged 18-45. The Law Commission (201st Report) has estimated that half of road-crash fatalities could be prevented with timely care, while a 2021 NITI Aayog-NCERT Emergency and Injury Care Report found that at least 30% of deaths are linked to delays in emergency response. India does not lack policies or guidelines; what it has lacked is a uniform, enforceable trauma-care framework.

What the top court has held
The Bench built on earlier jurisprudence. In *Parmanand Katara vs Union of India* (1989), the Court recognised the duty of doctors to render emergency aid. In *Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti vs State of West Bengal* (1996), it read access to emergency care into Article 21. In the present order, Article 21, the Court held, covers the entire chain that connects an injured person to medical care: the bystander, the emergency call, the ambulance, the paramedic, the receiving facility.



Piyush Tewari
The Founder and the CEO of SaveLIFE Foundation, a non-profit committed to saving lives through road safety and trauma care

Judicial oversight may finally realise the constitutional right to trauma care

The framing imposes a positive obligation on the state to build and sustain an integrated trauma response system.

This matters because survival in trauma depends on systems rather than on individual institutions. A well-equipped hospital cannot compensate for a delayed ambulance. An ambulance cannot help if the bystander is afraid to call. A trauma surgeon cannot save a patient who never reaches the hospital in time.

A cooperative federalism approach

Public health, hospitals and ambulance services fall under the State List in the Seventh Schedule, making cooperation between the Union and the States essential for a uniform trauma-care framework. Compliance affidavits and information notes filed by 34 States and Union Territories indicate a willingness to implement Union policies and standardise trauma care.

Accepting the Attorney General's submission that the Union should act as an enabler, the Bench called for "sustained and concerted efforts" by both levels of government. The directions do not alter the constitutional division of powers; they provide judicial backing to existing frameworks such as Prime Minister - Road Accident Victims' Hospitalisation and Assured Treatment (PM RAHAT), the National Ambulance Code AIS-125, Emergency Response Support System (ERSS)-112, the emergency medical technician (EMT) curriculum, the Good Samaritan Rules and the Health Ministry's trauma-care guidelines.

The directions fall into five clusters. On communications, all emergency numbers (100, 101, 102, 108, 1033, 1091 and their State variants) must be integrated into helpline 112 within three months, with mass media publicity. On bystander protection, every State must set up physical and digital grievance-redress systems for Good Samaritans, with nodal authorities at the State and district levels. On pre-hospital response, all

registered ambulances, public and private, must comply with the National Ambulance Code, carry GPS integrated in real time with helpline 112, and undergo structured audits of response times and clinical outcomes. States must also adopt the National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)-notified EMT curriculum. On hospitals, trauma facilities must be graded and designated so their capabilities are transparent. On finance, States have eight weeks to operationalise PM RAHAT, the Centre's cashless treatment scheme for road-crash victims; non-implementation will count as a violation of the Motor Vehicles Act. The Court has additionally directed the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to notify a national medical rescue protocol and a Trauma Registry data format, with State trauma registries to link up to a coordinated national registry.

A follow-up, the challenges

The order's significance lies as much in its compliance architecture as in its constitutional declaration. Copies will be sent to every Chief Secretary. Action Taken Reports must be filed with the Court Registry, and the Attorney General of India is to monitor implementation. The matter has been listed to be heard again in about four months for further directions.

Implementation will be challenging. State capacity varies widely, ambulance networks remain uneven, and helpline integration has lagged for long. The burden of inaction, however, has shifted. States must now demonstrate progress before the Court. For an injured Indian, the question after a crash or a fall should no longer be which number to call, whether help will arrive, or whether there is a capable hospital nearby. The Court has settled the constitutional question; governments must now ensure that timely and effective trauma care becomes a reality.

Source: *The Hindu* — 'Clearing the road to timely trauma care in India' (Piyush Tewari).

THE FIVE CLUSTERS OF DIRECTIONS

Communications	Emergency numbers (100/101/102/108/1033/1091) → integrated into helpline 112 in 3 months
Bystander	Grievance-redress systems for Good Samaritans; State/district nodal authorities
Pre-hospital	Ambulances to carry real-time GPS linked to 112 ; response-time audits
Hospitals	Trauma facilities graded & designated; NCAHP-notified EMT curriculum
Finance	8 weeks to operationalise PM RAHAT; non-compliance = Motor Vehicles Act violation

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 2** **Polity:** Article 21 (right to life); judicial activism / PIL; cooperative federalism; Seventh Schedule.
- GS 2** Government policies & interventions for health; management of the health sector.
- STATIC** Parmanand Katara (1989) & Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samiti (1996); Good Samaritan guidelines.

5

Sustaining India's Low-Fertility Future

GS 1&2 · Society/Polity

Demography & Ageing

The Hindu · Op-Ed

WHY IN NEWS

The latest **Sample Registration System** data puts India's **Total Fertility Rate (TFR)** at **1.9** children per woman — below the global average of 2.2 and the **replacement level of 2.1**. For a country long anxious about population growth, this marks an important demographic turn.

- The decline is **not uniform**. Rural fertility is near replacement; urban fertility has fallen to **1.5**. The sharper divide is geographic.
- **Delhi** is at an ultra-low **1.2**; Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal at **1.3** — lower than the US (1.6), Finland (1.4) and Japan (1.3). At the other end, **Bihar (2.9)**, UP (2.6), MP (2.4) and Rajasthan (2.3) remain high.
- India has crossed into low fertility as a **nation**, but not as **one demographic economy**: some States are ageing fast while others will add large labour cohorts for two more decades.
- Western Europe and Japan aged **after** industrialising and building risk-pooling welfare; even then ageing strained finances — **Japan's public debt crossed 200% of GDP**. India enters mass ageing on a weaker base.
- India has **~150 million people aged 60+**; by **2050** this reaches **347 million** (nearly one-fifth). **NITI Aayog** notes **70% of the elderly depend on others** and **78% have no pension cover**.

THE AUTHOR'S PRESCRIPTION

- An **inflation-indexed minimum pension floor** as a basic layer of public risk-pooling; **portable welfare** so entitlements move with migrant workers; a **mission-mode** embedding of geriatric care into primary & district health.

Sustaining India's low-fertility future

India is entering a new demographic phase. The latest Sample Registration System data puts the country's total fertility rate at 1.9 children per woman, below both the global average of 2.2 and the replacement level of 2.1 needed to keep a population stable. For a country that has long worried about population growth, this marks an important turn.

However, the decline is not uniform. Rural fertility is still around the replacement mark, while urban fertility has fallen to 1.5. The sharper divide is geographic. Delhi's fertility rate stands at an ultra-low of 1.2, while Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal are at 1.3. These levels are lower than those in the United States (1.6), Finland (1.4), and Japan (1.3). At the other end, Bihar remains at 2.9, followed by Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), and Rajasthan (2.3).

The implication is that India has crossed into low fertility as a nation, but not as one demographic economy. While some States are already moving rapidly towards ageing, others still have large cohorts set to enter the labour force over the next two decades. India must create productive opportunities for young workers in poorer and younger States, while strengthening income, care, and health systems for older populations where fertility has already fallen very low.

A difficult shift

The transition could indeed be challenging. Western Europe and Japan aged after they had industrialised, brought a large share of workers into formal employment, widened their tax systems, and built welfare institutions with some capacity for risk-pooling. Even then, ageing strained public finances; Japan saw the burden push public debt above 200% of GDP.

India enters the same demographic passage on a weaker institutional and fiscal base. Its



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personal

Since most workers spend their lives in informal or semi-formal work, old-age income security remains largely outside formal employment contracts

per-capita income is around \$2,800. Its direct tax base remains narrow, with net direct taxpayers accounting for only about 6% of the total population. State governments, tasked with much of the social-sector response, are already fiscally stretched.

The labour-market base is just as fragile. Since most workers spend their lives in informal or semi-formal work, old-age income security remains largely outside formal employment contracts. A contribution-based pension system works best when earnings are predictable, employment is formal, and workers can save regularly over decades. In India, that assumption holds for only a minority of the workforce.

Existing public safety nets acknowledge this vulnerability but do not provide meaningful income security. The Atal Pension Yojana assumes sustained contributions across one's working life, which is difficult for informal workers with volatile incomes. The old-age pension under the National Social Assistance Programme remains ₹200 a month for those aged 60 to 79 and ₹500 for those above 80. Such support does not protect the elderly from dependence.

Income security, however, is only one part of the problem. For generations, India's welfare state has been partly hidden inside the household. The joint family, co-resident children, and unpaid female care absorbed many of the costs of old age. That arrangement is weakening under the pressure of urbanisation, migration, nuclear households, and women's educational and work aspirations. Studies of left-behind elderly parents show that while children's migration improves monetary resources, it worsens loneliness and health vulnerability.

To be sure, India has about 150 million people aged 60 and above. By 2050, that number is projected to rise to 347 million, or nearly one-fifth of the population. Yet the income base of old age remains weak. NITI Aayog has noted that 70% of the elderly depend on

others while 78% have no pension cover. These numbers explain why India needs an inflation-indexed minimum pension floor, not as a substitute for contributory pensions, but as a basic layer of public risk-pooling for old age.

Ageing will also change the nature of healthcare demand. The pressure will come from the long-term management of hypertension, diabetes, dementia, disability, and palliative dependence. India has shown that sustained public investment can alter demographic outcomes. It did so for fertility, institutional deliveries, and child survival. The same mission-mode action will now be needed for embedding geriatric care into nursing practice, district health planning, and primary care.

The question of migration

The transition also has a federal dimension. The fastest-ageing States will increasingly need workers from younger States. This could be a source of national balance, but only if younger States invest aggressively in education, health, and skills, so that their workers do not merely move into low-wage informality elsewhere. It will also require older, richer, and more urbanised States to treat migrants not as temporary labour but as citizens who help sustain their economies and therefore deserve portable protection. A national labour market cannot rest on welfare systems tied narrowly to domicile. If workers move across State borders, their entitlements must move with them. Portability of welfare benefits must be one of the foundations of an ageing economy.

International evidence shows that low fertility can accompany prosperity. The difficulty is that India is entering mass ageing before completing the transitions that made ageing manageable elsewhere. India's low-fertility future will be sustainable only if stronger public systems gradually assume responsibilities that large families once carried quietly.

Source: *The Hindu* — 'Sustaining India's low-fertility future' (Amarendu Nandy).

FERTILITY SNAPSHOT (SRS)

India TFR	1.9 (replacement = 2.1; global = 2.2)
Urban / Rural	1.5 / near replacement
Lowest	Delhi 1.2; Kerala, TN, WB 1.3
Highest	Bihar 2.9; UP 2.6; MP 2.4; Rajasthan 2.3
Elderly (60+)	~150 mn now → 347 mn by 2050

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 1** **Society:** population & associated issues; demographic dividend; ageing; urbanisation.
- GS 2** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections (elderly); management of the health sector.
- STATIC** Demographic transition theory; TFR/replacement level; NSAP, Atal Pension Yojana, NPHCE.

6

‘Passport is a Travel Document, Not Proof of Citizenship’

GS 2 · Governance

Citizenship & Diaspora

The Hindu · News

WHY IN NEWS

A senior MEA official clarified that the Indian passport is a **“travel document”** and not a **“citizenship document”** — amid questions on whether a passport could challenge exclusion from the voter list during the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls.

- The passport’s purpose is to help Indians transit and travel through foreign ports and territories; it should **not be compared** with documents establishing citizenship rights.
- A passport **attests to nationality** abroad, yet is **not a document of citizenship**; it is issued after due diligence, with the MEA basing checks on Aadhaar, PAN and other agency records.
- On the **14th Passport Seva Divas (June 24)**: **27 countries** give visa-free entry, **47** offer visa-on-arrival and **66** provide e-visas to Indian passport-holders. Around **10%** hold a chip-based **e-passport**.
- There are **545 Passport Seva Kendras** covering almost every Lok Sabha constituency; one-stop centres for distressed diaspora women have opened in Gulf countries and Singapore.
- Next week India hosts a **Human Resource Mobility Forum** (Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Denmark) to connect skilled workers with **ethical employers** abroad and counter unscrupulous agents.

'Passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

The Indian passport is a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document", a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Wednesday.

The purpose of the Indian passport is to help Indians transit and travel through foreign ports and territories and it should not be compared with other documents that are used to establish citizenship rights, the official said.

Highlighting the importance of passports in connecting the Indian workforce with the global economy, MEA officials said the government will intensify mobility engagements with western na-

tions and Japan in coming months to help citizens get secure employment opportunities in these industrialised economies.

Voter list exclusion

"Passport is a travel document, not a document of citizenship and theoretically speaking that distinguishes passport from other documents. Even though while travelling abroad, passport attests to your nationality, yet it is not a document of your citizenship," a senior official said, in response to a question from *The Hindu* on whether the Indian passport could be used to challenge an exclusion from the voter list through the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls that



Passport is to facilitate foreign travel. It must not be compared with documents establishing citizenship, says MEA official.

is currently under way in 16 States.

Another MEA official said that the Indian passport is issued "after a lot of due diligence and we make sure that the person who gets it is actually entitled, and we also base ourselves on documents from several government agencies like the Aadhaar, PAN

card." The second official said that the MEA will host a major event on international mobility – the Human Resource Mobility Forum to be held in New Delhi from June 30 to July 1 – that will focus on countries like Italy, Germany, Japan, Russia, and Denmark.

Ethical migration

A large number of recruitment agencies from across the country are expected to participate in the event that will highlight ethical migration and create awareness about how to avoid unscrupulous agents that use illegal means to send Indians to conflict zones and high risk areas.

"We have to demolish the myths that one can go to Italy or Greece using un-

fair means and then send home lots of money," the official said.

Speaking on the occasion of the 14th Passport Seva Divas, marked on June 24, the official said that 27 countries have given visa-free entry status to Indian passport holders, while 47 countries offer visas on arrival and 66 countries provide electronic-visas (e-visas) to Indian passport holders. The MEA official said that around 10% of Indian passport-holders possess an e-passport, a chip-based document.

There are 545 passport seva kendras across the country catering to the needs of the growing number of passport applicants, and this passport network now covers almost every

Lok Sabha constituency.

In addition, one-stop centres for distressed women in the Indian diaspora have been opened in the Gulf countries and Singapore, supported by the Indian community. More such centres are expected to be established in other countries.

"Team MEA reaffirms its commitment to keep making passport services delivery faster, more transparent and accessible..."

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on the occasion of Passport Seva Divas, noting that chip-enabled e-passports and the opening of new passport seva kendras (PSKs) have contributed to ease of travel, helping Indians get global job opportunities.

Source: *The Hindu* — 'Passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship'.

PASSPORT — PRELIMS POINTERS

Issuing authority	Ministry of External Affairs (Passport Act, 1967)
Visa-free / VoA / e-visa	27 / 47 / 66 countries
e-passport	Chip-based; ~10% of holders
Seva Kendras	545; near-universal LS-constituency coverage
Passport Seva Divas	June 24 (14th edition in 2026)

STATIC / SYLLABUS LINKAGE

- GS 2 Governance:** citizenship; e-governance & service delivery; the Indian diaspora.
- GS 2 Welfare & protection mechanisms for overseas Indian workers (ethical migration).**
- STATIC** Passport Act 1967; Citizenship Act 1955; Emigration Act 1983; visa categories.

MAINS PRACTICE

EDITORIAL-BASED QUESTIONS · THE HINDU · 25 JUNE 2026

GS 1 / GS 2**15 Marks**

India has crossed below replacement-level fertility even as it enters mass ageing. Examine the social and fiscal challenges this ‘ageing-before-prosperity’ transition poses, and suggest measures to make it sustainable.

GS 2**15 Marks**

“The right to timely trauma care is an integral part of the right to life under Article 21.” In light of the Supreme Court’s recent judgment, discuss how cooperative federalism can be leveraged to build an enforceable, integrated trauma-care framework in India.

GS 2**15 Marks**

The reversion of ‘US Indo-Pacific Command’ to ‘US Pacific Command’, though nominal, may reflect a deeper recalibration of US strategy in Asia. Critically analyse its implications for the Quad and for India’s pursuit of a multipolar Asia.

GS 3**15 Marks**

A widening monsoon deficit amid a likely El Niño exposes the fragility of an agricultural economy built on the assumption of reliable rainfall. Suggest a comprehensive strategy to shift Indian agriculture from a rain-centric to a water-centric and climate-resilient model.

PRELIMS PRACTICE

10 MCQS WITH ANSWER KEY · THE HINDU · 25 JUNE 2026

Q1. With reference to the US Pacific Command (USPACOM), consider the following statements:

1. It was established in 1947 and is the oldest and largest of the US's six geographic combatant commands.
2. Its area of responsibility stretches from the west coast of the US to the western border of India.
3. It was renamed US Indo-Pacific Command in 2018 and reverted to USPACOM in 2026.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). All three are correct — USPACOM (est. 1947, HQ Hawaii) is the oldest/largest geographic command; its AOR runs from the US west coast to India's western border; renamed INDOPACOM in 2018, reverted in 2026.

Q2. The 'Quad', often in the news, consists of which of the following countries?

- (a) India, Japan, Australia, USA (b) India, USA, France, Australia
(c) India, Japan, South Korea, USA (d) India, Japan, Australia, UK

Answer: (a). The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprises India, Japan, Australia and the USA. Its agenda has narrowed to maritime security, economic prosperity, critical & emerging technology/minerals, and disaster response.

Q3. With reference to the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in India, consider the following statements:

1. India's TFR (per latest SRS) has fallen to 1.9, below the replacement level.
2. The replacement-level fertility is 2.1 children per woman.
3. Delhi has one of the lowest State/UT fertility rates while Bihar has the highest.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). All correct. India's TFR is 1.9 (replacement = 2.1); Delhi is ultra-low at 1.2 while Bihar remains highest at 2.9.

Q4. The judgment in *SaveLIFE Foundation vs Union of India* (2026) is significant because it:

- (a) Made the right to trauma care a part of Article 21 (b) Created a new Fundamental Duty for citizens
(c) Struck down the Good Samaritan Rules (d) Transferred public health to the Union List

Answer: (a). The Supreme Court held the right to trauma care — from the site of injury to definitive treatment — is integral to the right to life under Article 21, issuing nine binding directions.

Q5. With reference to the Indian passport, consider the following statements:

1. It is issued by the Ministry of External Affairs and serves as conclusive proof of citizenship.
2. An e-passport is a chip-based document.
3. Passport Seva Divas is observed on June 24.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). Statement 1 is wrong — the MEA clarified the passport is a travel document, not proof of citizenship. The e-passport is chip-based and Passport Seva Divas falls on June 24.

Q6. Regarding El Niño and the Indian monsoon, consider the following statements:

1. El Niño tends to suppress the air movement needed for rainclouds and weakens moisture-bearing trade winds.
2. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole and a favourable Madden-Julian Oscillation can offset an El Niño's effect.
3. El Niño is associated with abnormal warming of the central and eastern Pacific Ocean.

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 2 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d). All are correct. El Niño (Pacific warming) suppresses monsoon rainfall; a positive IOD and an active MJO over the Indian Ocean can partly counteract it.

Q7. The 'Gadgil Committee Report' and 'Kasturirangan Committee Report', sometimes seen in the news, are related to:

- (a) Constitutional reforms (b) Ganga Action Plan
(c) Inter-linking of rivers (d) Protection of the Western Ghats

Answer: (d). Both committees dealt with conservation of the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats (UPSC CSE 2016). The cardamom/plantation belt of Idukki lies in this region.

Q8. With reference to old-age income security in India, consider the following statements:

1. Under the National Social Assistance Programme, the old-age pension is a contributory scheme.
2. The Atal Pension Yojana is a contribution-based pension scheme aimed largely at the unorganised sector.
3. NITI Aayog has noted that a large majority of the elderly have no pension cover.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (b). Statement 1 is wrong — NSAP old-age pension is non-contributory, tax-funded (₹200/₹500). APY is contributory; NITI Aayog notes ~78% of the elderly lack pension cover.

Q9. As per the recent Supreme Court directions on trauma care, all emergency helpline numbers are to be integrated into which single number?

- (a) 100 (b) 108
(c) 112 (d) 102

Answer: (c). Emergency numbers (100, 101, 102, 108, 1033, 1091) are to be integrated into the single helpline 112 (ERSS) within three months, with mass publicity.

Q10. With reference to the International Day of Yoga, consider the following statements:

1. It was proposed by India and adopted by the UN General Assembly.
2. It is observed every year on June 21, coinciding with the summer solstice.
3. It can be observed only by member states of the United Nations.

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (a). Proposed by India and adopted by the UNGA (2014), the IDY is observed worldwide on June 21 (summer solstice). Statement 3 is wrong — observance is not restricted to UN member states.

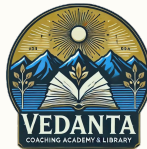
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

“A nation’s progress is measured not only by the speed of its roads, but by the safety of those who travel them and the dignity of those who can no longer walk.”

— On a Viksit yet Surakshit Bharat

MAINS ANSWER — QUICK POINTERS

- **Ageing:** 150 mn (60+) today → 347 mn by 2050; 70% dependent, 78% no pension → indexed pension floor + portable welfare.
- **Trauma care:** Art. 21 (Parmanand Katara → Paschim Banga → SaveLIFE); 4.67 lakh injury deaths/yr; 112 integration; PM RAHAT.
- **Indo-Pacific:** PACOM revert + NDS silence on Quad + “G-2” → India hedges via minilaterals, strategic autonomy, multipolar Asia.
- **Monsoon/El Niño:** 43% deficit, moderate-strong El Niño → rain-centric to water-centric shift; unified cropping-water authority.
- **Fire safety:** Lucknow fire — governance failure → NDMA, model fire law, coaching-centre regulation, fire-forensics.



VEDANTA COACHING ACADEMY & LIBRARY
The Hindu Complete Analysis · 25 June 2026