Society & Social Justice · GS - I

What is the concept of a ‘demographic winter’? Is the world moving towards such a situation? Elaborate.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2024	GS - I	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Low fertility, below replacement fertility, ageing population, population decline, shrinking workforce, dependency ratio, demographic transition, regional variation, East Asia, Europe, Africa, migration, automation

Model Answer

Introduction

“Demographic winter” refers to a prolonged period of very low fertility, population ageing and eventual population decline, resulting in a shrinking working-age population and rising dependency burden.

Why It Is Emerging

1. **Declining fertility:** Many countries have fertility rates below replacement level due to delayed marriage, smaller family preferences and changing social norms.
2. **Ageing:** Increased life expectancy combined with low fertility is rapidly raising the proportion of elderly people.
3. **Economic pressures:** High housing, education and childcare costs can discourage childbearing.

4. **Changing aspirations:** Women's education, urbanisation and greater employment opportunities have transformed family decisions.

Is the World Moving Towards It?

The trend is **uneven rather than universal**. Several European and East Asian societies face very low fertility and ageing. Countries such as Japan and South Korea illustrate this phenomenon strongly. Conversely, many African countries continue to have relatively high fertility and young populations.

Migration can partly compensate for labour shortages in ageing societies, while automation and productivity gains can also mitigate workforce decline.

Conclusion

The world is not moving uniformly towards a demographic winter, but demographic divergence is becoming pronounced. Countries need family-friendly policies, productive ageing, women's workforce participation, skill development and appropriate migration policies to manage these contrasting demographic realities.

BECOME IAS
AI POWERED UPSC PREP