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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Growing Old Before Growing Ready: On India's Ageing

THE HINDU

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Growing Old Before Growing Ready: On India's Ageing

 The Hindu

9 June 2026

GS2

GS1

 Source: ujjyari.com — Free UPSC & State PCS Current Affairs


INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India is still called a young country, yet its elderly population is rising fast. Is India preparing its health and social-security systems for ageing before the window closes?"

 Source: [Original editorial](#)
[The Hindu](#)
 Every fact web-verified against primary sources

[HOW](#)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

The Ministry of Ayush has set **“Yoga for Healthy Ageing”** as the theme for International Day of Yoga 2026. Behind the slogan is a real and under-discussed trend: India, still celebrated as young, is **ageing fast**. For an aspirant, this is a GS2 (health, social security) and GS1 (society) case on whether India is preparing for ageing **before its demographic dividend fades**, a question of preventive health and elder care.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

India’s **elderly population** is rising fast and may roughly double its share by **2050**, even as the country is seen as young. Ageing brings a heavy **non-communicable-disease** burden, demanding **preventive healthcare** (“healthspan,” not just lifespan), and exposes weak **elder care and pensions**. India must prepare its health and social-security systems **while the demographic dividend still lasts**.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT MATTERS
Demographic dividend	Growth from a large working-age population	A closing window
Healthspan	Years lived in good health	The goal of healthy ageing
Non-communicable diseases	Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease	Rise sharply with age
Care economy	Paid and unpaid elder/child care	Under-built in India

THE ANALYSIS: WHY INDIA MUST PREPARE NOW

- 1 **Ageing is arriving fast.** The share of those above 60 is projected to roughly double by 2050, while the country is still developing.
- 2 **The disease burden shifts.** Ageing brings rising NCDs, requiring a move from curative to preventive healthcare.
- 3 **The safety net is thin.** Limited geriatric care, low pension coverage, and the decline of the joint family leave many elderly vulnerable.
- 4 **The window is closing.** The demographic dividend will not last; preparation must happen while it does.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

India's 60-plus population is projected to roughly **double its share, toward 20%, by 2050** (UNFPA / national projections). **Health: NCDs** account for a large and rising share of deaths; the **National Programme for the Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE)** and **Ayushman Bharat** are key schemes. **Social security:** schemes include the **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)**, **Atal Pension Yojana**, and **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007**. **Prevention:** International Day of Yoga 2026 theme "**Yoga for Healthy Ageing**"; the focus on "healthspan." **Concept:** "growing old before growing rich"; the **care economy** and elder-friendly infrastructure.

THE DEBATE

Argument to focus on the young: India's priority must be its working-age population and the demographic dividend; ageing is a distant concern.

Argument to prepare for ageing now: Ageing is arriving while India is still developing; failing to prepare risks a large, vulnerable elderly population.

The balanced verdict: It is not either-or. India should reap the dividend **and** use those years to build the preventive-health and social-security systems an ageing population needs, because the cost of unpreparedness will be far higher later.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

Fast, visible stories (a young workforce, a yoga-day theme) can obscure slow, structural trends (ageing) that will define the future. The strong answer surfaces the long-run trend and asks whether present policy is preparing for it. This “mind the slow-moving variable” lens applies to demographics, climate, debt and groundwater alike.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

India ageing (60-plus doubling by 2050) -> rising NCD burden + weak elder care/pensions while demographic-dividend window closes. The preparation: preventive healthcare + geriatric care + pensions + care economy + elder-friendly infrastructure -> healthy, secure ageing.

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Strengthen preventive healthcare**, NCD screening, yoga and lifestyle programmes.
- ② **Expand geriatric care and pension coverage** for the elderly.
- ③ **Build the care economy** and elder-friendly infrastructure.
- ④ **Act within the dividend window**, funding the ageing years from the working years.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

“India must prepare for ageing even as it reaps its demographic dividend.” Examine the policy challenges of an ageing India. (250 words)

“India risks growing old before it grows rich, and old before it grows ready; the years of the dividend are the years to prepare for the years of ageing.”

60-plus share toward 20% by 2050 · NPHCE · Ayushman Bharat · NSAP, Atal Pension Yojana · Maintenance and Welfare of Senior Citizens Act 2007 · International Day of Yoga 2026 theme.

Is India doing enough to prepare its health and social-security systems for ageing, or is it distracted by the dividend?

Connects to GS1 PYQs on population and society and GS2 on health and social security; probable forward question is the prepare-for-ageing framing above.

today’s International Day of Yoga article; static GS1 on demographics and GS2 on health and vulnerable sections.

Sources: *The Hindu, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, UNFPA India*

Source: Growing Old Before Growing Ready: On India's Ageing — Ujyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

The “Yoga for Healthy Ageing” theme of International Day of Yoga 2026 is a useful prompt to confront a quieter reality: India is ageing rapidly, and it must build preventive healthcare, elder care and social security before its demographic dividend fades, so that longer lives are also healthier ones.

✓ SUPPORTING

- India’s elderly population is rising fast and is projected to roughly double its share by 2050, even as the country is still seen as young.
- Ageing brings a rising burden of non-communicable diseases, demanding a shift toward preventive healthcare and “healthspan,” not just lifespan.

- India lacks adequate elder-care infrastructure and universal social security, leaving many of the old dependent and vulnerable.

COUNTER

Some argue India's priority must remain its young workforce and the demographic dividend, and that ageing is a distant concern for a still-young population.

WAY FORWARD

Strengthen preventive healthcare (NCD screening, yoga and lifestyle), expand geriatric care and pensions, support elder-friendly infrastructure and the care economy, and act while the dividend window is still open.

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MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

QUESTION

"India must prepare for ageing even as it reaps its demographic dividend." Examine the policy challenges of an ageing India. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

India is celebrated as a young nation, and rightly so. But behind the demographic dividend lies a quieter trend: India is ageing, and the "Yoga for Healthy Ageing" theme of this year's Yoga Day is a timely reminder to prepare.

BODY

India's elderly population, those above 60, is growing rapidly and is projected to roughly double as a share of the population by 2050, a shift that will arrive while large parts of the country are still developing. This poses a double challenge.

First, health: ageing brings a rising burden of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, which demands a shift from curative to preventive healthcare, the logic behind promoting yoga, lifestyle change and NCD screening, and the focus on "healthspan" (years lived

in good health) over mere lifespan. Second, social security and care: India has limited geriatric-care infrastructure, low pension coverage, and a weakening of the traditional joint family that once cared for the old, leaving many elderly people dependent and vulnerable.

The instinct to focus only on the young workforce is understandable but short-sighted: the demographic dividend is a closing window, and a country that does not prepare its health and social-security systems will grow old before it grows rich, and before it grows ready. The response must be to build preventive healthcare, expand pensions and geriatric care, invest in an elder-friendly built environment and a formal care economy, and use the dividend years to fund the ageing years.

CONCLUSION

A longer life is a gift only if it is a healthy and secure one. India should prepare for ageing now, while its dividend lasts, so that growing old does not mean growing vulnerable.

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