BLOGS

Passage-based Reading Comprehension Questions for CLAT 2026

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PASSAGE

There can be too much of a good thing, after all. The demographic transition that Kerala has heralded in the country has now delivered a sucker punch to the State, with its maternal mortality ratio climbing.

Kerala led the shift to the phase of low fertility and low mortality in India, and got further, first. As the fertility level dropped, the number of births came down, thereby skewering the best maternal mortality rate (calculated as the number of deaths for every 1,00,000 live births) of the country, in Kerala.

The State led the demographic transition by achieving the total replacement level fertility rate in 1987-88, and the other southern States followed in the mid-2000s. A TFR of 2.1 is considered the replacement level, indicating the number of children a woman must have in order for the society to maintain its size across generations.

Below this level the population size falls. In fact, this has led to moments of anxiety, politically for the southern States that feel that with their sub-replacement level fertility rates, they will be at a disadvantage when it comes to the proposed delimitation exercise of Lok Sabha seats based on population figures.

In theory, demographic transition occurs when a historical shift happens from high birth rates and high death rates to low birth and death rates, aided by advancements in education, economic development and technology.

Such a transition is said to have occurred in most parts of the world, allowing the world to stabilise from the unprecedented growth forecast by Malthus, and then move on to reduce population growth, and birth rates. The theory posits four stages – moving from stable population to a rapid population growth, levelling out and finally, a decline.

Nations that have reached there, including South Korea, are struggling to revive population growth, and even incentivising childbearing does not seem to have the intended effect, as the fertility rate continues to drop.

While it is impossible to stop a demographic transition in its tracks, governments must prepare for the trail of consequences that it will bring in its wake. There will be far-reaching economic and societal consequences as the proportion of the working-age population comes down and the aged population increases, placing an inordinate burden on the resources of nations.

It is, therefore, important to strengthen public finances and social support systems in preparation for a growing elderly population. Health-care financing will have to be improved, and policies that support equal participation in household chores must be prioritised.

Source: **https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/the-price-of-success-on-keralas-demographic-transition/article69124292.ece**

1. What does the phrase “trail of consequences” in the passage imply?

Answer: B
Explanation: The passage uses the phrase “trail of consequences” to describe the economic and societal challenges following demographic transitions.

2. What is a likely effect of equal participation in household chores, as suggested in the passage?

A) A rise in fertility rates
B) Better health outcomes for the elderly
C) Improved societal balance
D) Decline in economic burden

Answer: C
Explanation: The passage implies that equal participation in household chores can contribute to a balanced and equitable society.

3. Which statement accurately summarizes Malthus’ population growth theory, as implied in the passage?

A) Population growth stabilizes with low fertility
B) Unchecked population growth leads to scarcity

C) Population growth reduces with education

D) Economic development causes overpopulation

Answer: B

Explanation: The passage briefly references Malthus' prediction of unchecked population growth causing scarcity, countered by demographic transition.

4. Which phrase best describes the passage's tone?

A) Alarmist and pessimistic

B) Analytical and cautionary

C) Optimistic and encouraging

D) Neutral and indifferent

Answer: B

Explanation: The passage is analytical, highlighting the demographic transition's challenges while cautioning about its societal and economic consequences.

5. What role does health-care financing play in addressing demographic transition issues?

A) It is unnecessary

B) It helps manage the increasing elderly population

C) It reduces fertility rates

D) It replaces the working-age population

Answer: B

Explanation: The passage emphasizes improving health-care financing to support the growing elderly population.

6. What is the primary consequence of a declining working-age population mentioned in the passage?

A) Increased economic growth

B) Reduced societal burden

C) Inordinate pressure on resources

D) Improved health-care systems

Answer: C

Explanation: The passage highlights that a declining working-age population and an increasing aged population will place a heavy burden on national resources.

7. What are the four stages of demographic transition mentioned in the passage?

A) Rapid population growth, stable growth, economic decline, stabilization

B) Stable population, rapid growth, leveling out, decline

C) Overpopulation, replacement level, stabilization, aging

D) High fertility, low fertility, growth, decline

Answer: B

Explanation: The passage describes the four stages as moving from stable population to rapid growth, leveling out, and finally, a decline.

8. What is the meaning of the word “heralded” as used in the passage?

A) Criticized

B) Announced or signaled

C) Postponed

D) Questioned

Answer: B

Explanation: In the context of the passage, “heralded” means to announce or signal the arrival of something, such as Kerala’s demographic transition.

9. Which word is closest in meaning to “skewering” as used in the passage?

A) Distorting

B) Improving

C) Balancing

D) Observing

Answer: A

Explanation: “Skewering” in the passage refers to distorting or negatively affecting something, such as the maternal mortality rate.

10. Which word is the opposite in meaning to “inordinate” as used in the passage?

A) Excessive

B) Proportional

C) Limited

D) Unnecessary

Answer: B

Explanation: “Inordinate” means excessive or disproportionate, so the opposite is “proportional.”