End of a 25-year two-child bar: relief for Madhya Pradesh government employees



Original symbolic illustration: pcsmantra.com

News reference: 18-19 November 2026 | Published: 20 November 2026 Mains: GS Paper-II (governance, social policy), Paper-I (population and society) Prelims: state service rules, population policies, NFHS data

What was decided -

On 18 November 2026 the Madhya Pradesh Cabinet, at a special meeting at Gandhi Sagar Forest Retreat in Mandsaur district chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, approved scrapping the 25-year-old two-child restriction for government employees and job aspirants.

Which rules changed -

- Sub-rule (6) of Rule 6 of the MP Civil Services (General Conditions of Service) Rules, 1961 removed
- The clarification on 'more than two living children' in Sub-rule (4) of Rule 22 of the MP Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1965 deleted

Background -

The norm was introduced in 2001 by the Congress government led by Digvijaya Singh to check population growth. A third child invited disciplinary action against serving employees, and candidates with more than two children were ineligible for government jobs.

What happens now -

- All pending disciplinary proceedings based solely on having more than two living children stand terminated with immediate effect
- Cases where final orders and penalties were already imposed will not be reopened

The stated reason -

The government cited falling fertility in the state and the country. NFHS-5 (2019-21) put India's total fertility rate at 2.0, below the replacement level of 2.1, which in analysts' view weakens the case for a punitive two-child norm.

Mains practice question

Q1. Punitive two-child norms are gradually being withdrawn from population policy. Critically examine this shift in the context of India's declining fertility rate. (250 words)

Answer outline

Introduction - the MP decision and its 2001 background. Body - rationale of punitive norms versus their limits (disproportionate burden on women and the poor, TFR below replacement); incentive-based family welfare versus coercion; key NFHS-5 figures; the demographic dividend window. Conclusion - voluntary family planning and investment in health and education, not penalties.

FAQ

Q: When was the two-child policy introduced in Madhya Pradesh? A: In 2001, under the Digvijaya Singh government, as a population-control measure.

Q: Will old penalty cases be reopened? A: No. Only pending proceedings are terminated; finalised cases stay closed.

Q: Which rules were amended? A: Rule 6(6) of the MP Civil Services (General Conditions of Service) Rules, 1961, and the 'more than two living children' clarification in Rule 22(4) of the MP Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1965.

Sources:

- https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/madhya-pradesh/madhya-pradesh-scraps-two-child-policy-for-govt-employees-after-25-years/article71722904.ece
- NFHS-5 (2019-21) India report: https://iipsindia.ac.in/content/national-family-health-survey-nfhs-5-india-report

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