

# Population will decline after 2040

## *Fertility rate of Lankan women dropping*

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Sri Lanka's population will decline after 2040, primarily due to a significantly low level of fertility, a think-tank has warned.

Research by the Institute of Policy Studies has revealed that Sri Lanka's population which is around 20 million now will reach 20.1 million by 2011 and could attain its peak of 21.1 million in 2031.

According to analysts, it is not only Sri Lanka's fast aging population that authorities should be mindful of but the continuing decline in the Total Fertility Rate registered as 1.96 children per woman between 1995 and 2000. This is even below the replacement level of 2.1.

What is strange is that such low levels of TFR have been recorded almost always in advanced countries and Sri Lanka was earlier forecast to reach the replacement level in 2000,



the bureau would not take the blame for the declining TFR. "We are only promoting family planning to improve the health of a family, where it no longer can afford to bring up an additional child."

Asked whether the bureau continued to pay people to undergo free sterilization, the official said the Rs.500 was still being paid, but he dismissed it as just an allowance in view of the steep decline in the value

but according to the IPS study, it had been reached as far back as 1995.

A senior official of the Government's Family Health Bureau said

of the rupee since this scheme was started in the 1980s.

The official said the low TFR could be more the result of uncontrolled illegal abortions which had reached alarmingly high levels with authorities doing little to check it.

The official also claimed that births were still on the increase in the country going up from 360,000 in 2004 to 370,000 in 2005. But according to the IPS study, which the Bureau did not challenge, Sri Lanka's population would decline after 2040.

What is most alarming about these projections is that the total dependency ratio which stood at 54.4 percent — child dependency 38.7 percent and old age dependency 15.7 percent in 2001 — would rise to 96 percent by 2081, with old age dependency taking the lion's share of 67 percent, the analysts said.