South Korean Model of Elder Education

Why in news?

India's policy attention has mostly been focused on the youth population as how to educate, skill and find jobs, the problem with ageing population has fallen largely off the radar.

What is the global status of ageing population?

- 34 countries in the world currently have senior citizen population (aged 65 and above) more than their working-age population.
- By 2050, it could increase to as much as 90 countries.
- By mid-century, 1 in 6 humans will be aged above 65 years, up from 1 in 11 in 2019.

What is the status in India?

- **Elderly in India 2021 Report** - India's above 60 population is projected to touch 194 million in 2031 from 138 million in 2021.
- **Old-Age Dependency Ratio** - is projected to rise to over 20 per cent by 2031.

Old-age dependency ratio is defined as the number of persons aged 60-plus per 100 persons relative to the age group 15-59

- **Longitudinal Ageing Study India (LASI)** - Nearly 62 and 35% of people aged 45-59 years and 60 years above respectively are currently working.
- But they are not secure, since a bulk of these are engaged in the already overloaded agricultural sector.

What happened in South Korea?

- South Korea witnessed a rapid growth both in its economy and population post the Korean war.
- Its demographic dividend (when the maximum percentage of its population fell within the working age) peaked around 1990.
- Eventually, South Korea witnessed a demographic shift towards older population.
- Its population declined for the first time in 2020 and its fertility rate, 0.84 births per woman, is the lowest in the world.
- But South Korea deals with its ageing population while sustaining its economic prosperity and national security.

What is the South Korean Model?

- Korea's school-age population is declining with falling birth rates.

- Fewer children need to be educated now while the number of adults with re-skilling/upskilling needs is growing.
- To address this, the South Korean government allocate an extra Rs. 75,400 crores for higher and lifelong education.
- This will come through fresh budgetary allocations as well as from the budget for school education and allotted to education and reskilling of older adults.

Should India follow the South Korean Model?

- In India, education as a whole has always remained chronically underfunded.
- The government allots roughly 16% of its expenditure to education and the Centre and States together spend about 4% of GDP on education.
- The historical average is just around 3% of GDP, about half of what experts recommend.
- Given that Indian education sector is underfunded, the argument to allocate more resources for re-skilling and lifelong learning might not be valid.
- But it is important for India to observe the South Korean model.
- If we do not look at the problem of our greying population now, it will be putting an intolerable burden on future generations.

Reference

A Korean lesson in Education

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