UN Population Report- Projections and Implications

Why in news?

Recently, the United Nations has released the 2022 edition of the World Population Prospects (WPP).

What is the World Population Prospects?

- The 2022 Revision of World Population Prospects is the 27th edition that has been prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN Secretariat.
- It has been published in a biennial cycle since 1951.
- It presents population estimates from 1950 to the present for 237 countries or areas, underpinned by analyses of historical demographic trends.
- This latest assessment considers the results of several national population censuses as well as information from vital registration systems and nationally representative sample surveys.
- The 2022 revision also presents population projections to the year 2100 that reflect a range of outcomes at the global, regional and national levels.
- For the first time, the estimates and projections are presented in one-year intervals of age and time instead of the five-year intervals used previously.

What are the main takeaways for the global population?

- **Population growth-** The world's population continues to grow, but the pace of growth is slowing down.
    - The global population is expected to grow to around 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100.
    - In 2020, the global growth rate fell under 1% per year for the first time since 1950.
- **Rates of population growth**- Rates of population growth vary significantly across countries and regions.
    - More than half of the projected increase in global population up to 2050 will be concentrated in just 8 countries - Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines and United Republic of Tanzania.
    - The 46 least developed countries (LDCs) are among the world's fastest-growing.
- **Older population**- The population of older persons is increasing both in numbers and as a share of the total.
    - The share of the global population aged 65 years or above is projected to rise from 10% in 2022 to 16% in 2050.
- **Fertility**- A sustained drop in fertility has led to an increased concentration of the working age population (between 25- 64 years), creating an opportunity for accelerated economic growth per capita.
    - The shift in the age distribution provides a time-bound opportunity for accelerated economic growth known as the "**demographic dividend**".
- **International migration**- International migration is having important impacts on population

trends for some countries.
    - Over the next few decades, migration will be the sole driver of population growth in high-income countries.
- **Impact of COVID-19 pandemic**- The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all components of population change, including fertility, mortality and migration.
    - Global life expectancy at birth fell to 71.0 years in 2021, down from 72.8 in 2019, due mostly to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.
- **India's population**- India will surpass China as the world's most populous country in 2023, while the global population will reach 8 billion this year.

How do they compare the UN projection with India's Census?

- In India, the Registrar General comes out with a population projection based on the Census.
- The last such projection was released in 2019 and it was based on Census 2011.
- The Census projection is slightly lower than the UN projection.
- If not in 2023, then in another few years India would overtake China as the world's most populous country.

What are the policy implications arising out of the trend?

- In the past, when the world population was still at 5-billion or 6-billion levels, there was a concern about overcrowding.
- But, those concerns no longer exist because the global population is already 8 billion and several countries (including India) have achieved a replacement rate of fertility.
- **Quality of life**- The concern now is not about the absolute numbers but the quality of life for the people alive.
- The focus now has shifted to whether we can reduce poverty, provide healthcare facilities, education etc.
- In India, cohorts of 0-14 years and 15-24 years will continue to decline while those of 25-64 and 65+ will continue to rise for the coming decades.
- **Skill development**- For those already in the 25-64 age bracket, there is a need for skilling to ensure they are more productive and have better incomes.
- **Social security**- Provisioning of social security to 65+ category is obviously a big challenge.
- This will stretch the resources of the future governments.

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