U.P.’s New Population Policy

Why in news?

- Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister launched the State’s population policy for 2021-2030.
- Also, draft of the Uttar Pradesh Population (Control, Stabilisation and Welfare) Bill, 2021 was published earlier.

What are the key features of the policy?

- The new policy aims to achieve the following targets:
    i. decrease the Total Fertility Rate from 2.7 to 2.1 by 2026 and 1.7 by 2030
    ii. increase Modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate from 31.7 to 45 by 2026 and to 52 by 2030
    iii. increase male methods of contraception use from 10.8 to 15.1 by 2026 and to 16.4 by 2030
    iv. decrease Maternal Mortality Rate from 197 to 150 to 98
    v. decrease Infant Mortality Rate from 43 to 32 to 22
    vi. decrease Under 5 Infant Mortality Rate from 47 to 35 to 25
- The state would attempt to maintain a balance of population among the various communities.
- Awareness and extensive programmes would be held among communities, cadres and geographical areas that have a higher fertility rate.

What does the draft bill propose?

- Under the draft bill, a two-child norm would be implemented and promoted.
- A person who will have more than two children after the law comes into force would be debarred from the benefits of government welfare schemes.
- Ration card units would be limited to four.
- The person will be barred from contesting elections to local authority or any body of the local self-government.
- Such persons would also become ineligible to apply for government jobs under the State government.
- They will be barred from promotion in government services and will not receive any kind of subsidy.

- The provisions would come into force one year after the date of publication of the gazette.
- The draft alsoproposes to incentivise one-child and two-childfamilies.
- These include perks in government schemes, rebates in taxes and loans, and cash awards if family planning is done, among other sops.

What is the rationale?

- The policy seems to be in line with principles of the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development in 1994.
- The Cairo Consensus called for a promotion of reproductive rights, empowering women, universal education, maternal and infant health.
- The objective was to address the relations between the issues of poverty and high fertility.

What are the concerns?

- While the above intention is welcome, the government fails to take affirmative steps in that direction.
- It instead seems to have taken the path of a mixture of incentives and penalties.
- It is approaching the socio-economic issue as a demographic one.
- The incentives/disincentives approach has been denounced in the past by the National Human Rights Commission too.
- Also, empirical studies of coercive measures haveshown such policies' discrimination against the poor and the marginalised.
- Studies have also found no discernible effect of such measures on population control.

What should be done?

- India is not being threatened by a "population explosion".
- India's TFRs have been reducing substantially across most States, even in U.P. and Bihar with the highest TFRs.
- So, to hasten the drop to replacement levels of fertility, States should tackle the socio-economic issues faced by India's largely youthful demography.
- Economic growth as well as attention to education, health and empowerment of women work far better to disincentivise larger families.
- The success of India's southern states in containing population growth clearly indicates this.
- In all, socio-economic empowerment is more effective than coercion in bringing down fertility rates.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

