

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 also proposes to incentivise one-child and two-child families.
- 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 have shown 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

