World Population Projections 2019 - UN - II

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What is the issue?

- India is set to become the most populous nation in 2027, surpassing China.
- The demographic changes will unfold varied challenges and call for making appropriate policy changes to ensure quality of life for all.

How is India in comparison with China?

- India's population has ballooned from around 555 million in 1970 to close to 1,300 million now, a 146% expansion.
- In comparison, China's population grew at about half that pace (73%), during the same period.
- This was largely on account of undemocratic decisions such as one-child policy in China.
- China saw its total fertility rate decline from 6.30 in 1965-70 to 5.41 in 1970-75 after the two-child policy was introduced.
- It fell further after the one-child policy was implemented and currently stands at 1.69.
- In contrast, in India, the total fertility rate declined from 5.7 in 1965-70 to 4.85 in 1970-75 and is currently at 2.24.
- However, there are wide variations across States with 1.6 in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and at 3.3 in Bihar and 3.1 in Uttar Pradesh.
- The fertility rate in the rural areas is much higher than in the urban areas.
- An encouraging factor is that the median age of India's population will be 28.43 years in 2020 compared to 38.4 years in China.

How will migration trend be?

- The UN report shows migration to 'countries with a falling ratio of working-age people to those above 65' will be steady.
- This is because such economies open up to workers to sustain economic production.
- Japan has the lowest such ratio, followed by Europe and the Caribbean.
- In over three decades, North America, Eastern and South-eastern Asia will join this group.

- India will have a vast number of young people and insufficient natural resources left for exploitation.
- Preparing for the changes and opportunities that migration offers will depend on a skills revolution.

What are the challenges ahead for India?

- India's growing population poses more challenges than opportunities.
- The country will have to invest in -
    i. augmenting the education and healthcare system
    ii. grow more food
    iii. provide more housing
    iv. sharply increase drinking water supply
    v. add capacity to basic infrastructure, such as roads, transport, electricity and sewage
- To fund all such expansion, the nation needs to raise resources through taxation and other means.
- Even if less than 5 million people are entering the workforce every year, employing them at a decent wage is a challenging task.

What should the policy priorities be?

- **Resource management** - Implementing a 'universal basic income' as a social safety valve could be an option, for which tax compliance needs to improve.
- Managing forest and water resources for future generations must assume centre-stage in policy-making.
- This calls for a paradigm shift in the notion of development.
- **Social development** - Achieving a reduction in fertility rates in States such as Bihar, U.P, Haryana, M.P, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh is crucial.
- The states must singularly focus on improving education and health access for women, both of which will help them be gainfully employed.
- The poor, populous northern States must make concerted advances in women's literacy, health and participation in the workforce.
- The achievements of the southern States in this regard offer much to learn from.
- **Ageing population** - A rise in life expectancy and growing population of older adults is a certainty.
- It opens up prospects for employment in many new services catering to them.
- Urban facilities have to be reimagined, with an emphasis on access to good, affordable housing and mobility.

- The Sustainable Development Goals framework provides a roadmap to this new era.

Source: The Hindu, Business Line

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