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China Relaxes Two Child Policy: Lessons for India

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Why in News

Recently, China **relaxed its two child policy** and announced it will now **allow three children per married couple**.

It also announced that it would **increase the retirement age** by a few months every year. For the past four decades, the **retirement age in China has been 60 for men and 55 for women**.

Key Points

- **China's Population Policies:**

- **One Child Policy:**

- China embarked upon its one-child policy in **1980**, when its **government was concerned that the country's growing population**, which at the time was approaching one billion, **would impede economic progress.**

- **Chinese authorities have long hailed the policy** as a success, claiming that **it helped the country avert severe food and water shortages** by preventing up to 40 crore people from being born.

- It was a **source of discontent**, as the state **used brutal tactics such as forced abortions and sterilisations.**

- It also met criticism and remained controversial for **violating human rights, and for being unfair to the poor.**

- **Two Child Policy:**

- From **2016**, the Chinese government finally **allowed two children per couple**— a policy change that **did little to arrest the rapid fall in population growth.**

- **Three Child Policy:**

- It was announced after **China's 2020 census** data showed that the country's **rate of population growth is falling rapidly despite the 2016 relaxation.**

- The country's **fertility rate has dropped to 1.3**, far below the **replacement level of 2.1** required for a generation to have enough children to replace it.

- The **United Nations** expects China's **population to begin declining after 2030**, but some experts say this could happen as early as in the next one or two years.

- **Concerns of Falling Population:**

- **Decreased Labour:**

- When the young population in a country declines, it creates **labour shortages, which have a major detrimental impact on the economy.**

- **Increased Social Spending:**

- More older people also means that **demands for healthcare and pensions** can soar, **burdening the country's social spending system** further when fewer people are working and contributing to it.

- **Critical for Developing Nations:**

- A problem unique to China, though, is that unlike the other developed countries part of this trend, **it is still a middle-income society, despite being the world's second-largest economy.**
 - Prosperous countries like Japan and Germany, which face similar demographic challenges, can **depend on investments in factories, technology and foreign assets.**
 - China, however, still **depends on labour-intensive manufacturing and farming.**
 - A **drop in demographic dividend** could thus **hurt China and other developing nations like India** more than those in the rich world.

- **Lessons For India:**

- **Avoid Stringent Measures:**

- Stringent population control measures have landed China in a human crisis that was inevitable. **If coercive measures like a two-child limit are enforced, India's situation could be worse.**

- **Women Empowerment:**

- The proven ways to lower the fertility rate are to **give women the control over their fertility** and ensure their greater empowerment through **increased access to education, economic opportunities and healthcare.**

- As a matter of fact, **China's fertility reduction** is only partly attributable to coercive policies, and is **largely because of the sustained investments the country had made in education, health and job opportunities for women.**

- **Need to Stabilize Population:**

- India has done very well with its **family planning measures** and now it is at **replacement level fertility of 2.1**, which is desirable.
 - It needs to **sustain population stabilisation** because in **some States** like Sikkim, Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Kerala and Karnataka, the **total fertility rate is way below replacement level**, which means it can experience in 30-40 years what China is experiencing now.

India's Case

- **India's Population Growth:**
 - India's population is estimated to be over **1.36 billion as of March 2021**, indicating an estimated **12.4% growth over the last decade**.
That is **lower than the 17.7% between 2001 and 2011**.
 - However, a 2019 **United Nations** report had projected **India to overtake China as the most populous country by 2027**.
India is **expected to add nearly 273 million people between 2019 and 2050**.
- **Indian Measures for Population Control:**
 - **Prime Minister's Appeal:** During his **Independence Day Speech** in **2019**, the Prime Minister appealed to the country that **population control was a form of patriotism**.
 - **Mission Parivar Vikas:** The Government launched **Mission Parivar Vikas** in **2017** for substantially **increasing access to contraceptives and family planning services in 146 high fertility districts**.
 - **Compensation Scheme for Sterilization Acceptors:** Under the scheme, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provides **compensation for loss of wages** to the beneficiary and also to the service provider (& team) for conducting sterilizations from the year **2014**.
 - **National Family Planning Indemnity Scheme (NFPIS) :** This scheme was launched in the year **2005**. Under this scheme, **clients are insured in the eventualities of death**, complication and failure following sterilization.

Source:TH