



Mains Practice Question

Q. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) India is set to become the world's most populous country by 2023. Critically examine the challenges and opportunities of rising population. (250 words)

21 Nov, 2022 GS Paper 1 Indian Society

Approach

- Start your answer by briefly discussing the facts of latest report of United Nations Population Fund.
- Discuss the challenges and opportunities of growing population.
- Conclude by suggesting some measures to tackle rising population.
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

- According to the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, the **human population across the globe touched 8 billion**.
- The **World Population Prospects 2022**, put **India's population estimate at 1.412 billion** in 2022, compared with **China's 1.426 billion**.
 - India is likely to peak at **1.7 billion population in 2048** and then start **declining to 1.1 billion at the end of century**.

Body

- As per UN, India's fertility rate has hit **2.1 births per woman i.e., replacement-level fertility and is further declining**.
- As of 2022, **more than half the world's population lives in Asia, China and India being the two most populous countries** with more than 1.4 billion people each.
- While India's population growth is stabilising, it is **"still growing at 0.7% per year"** and is **set to surpass China in 2023 as the world's most populous country**.
- **Challenges:**
 - **Stabilizing Population:** It would be a challenge to achieve optimal fertility rate in states such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh — which have higher fertility rate as per Sample Registration System data.
 - **Quality of Life:** There will be a need to spend more on education, healthcare system, grow more food, and to add capacity to basic infrastructures, such as roads, transport, electricity, and sewage to provide a minimum quality of life to every citizen.
 - **Demographic dividend:** India's low literacy rate and poor skilling of human capital will turn demographic dividend into a burden.
 - **Ageing of Population:** As per India Ageing Report 2017 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) the share of the population over the age of 60 could increase from 8% in 2015 to 19% in 2050. India will have to spend more on their health along with geriatric care.
 - **Inequitable income distribution:** In the face of an increasing population, unequal distribution of income and inequalities within the country would be a possible outcome.
- **Opportunities:**

- **Large human resource pool:** India is a youthful nation with the largest cohort of young people anywhere in the world, with major potential to achieve its demographic dividend. Despite world's ageing population, India's youthful population can be a global resource to solve global problems.
- In the past decade, India has emerged as a major back office to the world with global firms outsourcing work to take advantage of the country's less expensive, educated, young English-speaking workforce.
- India produces 2.5 million IT, engineering and life sciences graduates a year, besides about 650,000 post graduates in science and IT related subjects. The IT sector alone employs about 850,000 graduates and professionals while the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors are snapping up others.

Conclusion

- **For young and adolescent populations,** there is a **need for skilling**, which is the only way to ensure they are more productive and have better incomes.
- **Increasing welfare and status of women:** In many sections of our society, women are still treated as second-class citizens. They are not allowed to pursue education and hence spend their life doing household work. However, instead of confining women to house duties and letting them study can prove to be beneficial as it could add to growing status of the women plus an additional source of income.
- **Increasing awareness for the use of contraceptives:** Talking about contraceptives is still Taboo in various parts of our society. There should be camps that create awareness about contraceptives.
- **Family planning:** Family planning is one of another few steps helping towards controlling population. Good family planning can bring stability to an individual's life.
- To maximize the potential benefits of a favourable age distribution, countries need to **invest in the further development of their human capital** by ensuring **access to health care and quality education** at all ages and by **promoting opportunities for productive employment and decent work.**

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