



Mains Practice Question

Q. India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous country by 2027. Discuss the challenges of rising population and suggest a way forward. (250 words)

10 Sep, 2019 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Introduce by mentioning about the status of population growth in India.
- Mention the challenges of having high population.
- Suggest measures to handle the situation.

Introduction

According to the **UN's World Population Prospects 2019** report, India is projected to become the most populous country by 2027 surpassing China and host 1.64 billion people by 2050. The fertility rate in the country still lies in the range of 2.1-4.

Body

Challenges of rising population

- **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.
- **Sustainable Urban Growth:** UN report suggests that by 2050, the urban population will be increased to 87.7 million and the number of urban agglomerations consisting more than a million people is also expected to be doubled by 2035. Thereby creating the need for improvisation of urban facilities with an emphasis on access to good, affordable housing and mobility.
- **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.

Steps To Be Taken

- There is a need to **empower women** by providing better healthcare facilities. Ensuring availability of safe contraceptive options and services by advocating a small family norm without adopting any coercive measures as envisaged in **National Population Policy of 2000**.
- The rural access to quality medical services has to be improved.
- Universal education, value-added skills accretion and massive growth in employment in the formal

sector should be the key focus areas.

- Making agriculture remunerative and keeping food prices stable are crucial to ensure nutrition for all.
- More support from the private sector is needed for supporting Government's family planning program.

Way Forward

The proposed '**Population Regulation Bill, 2019**' seeks to impose a two child norm. However, it can add to the burden on women, by way of sex selective practices and forced sterilisations. As the Economic Survey-2018 points out that 'son meta preference' (the desire to have a male child)- has resulted in 21 million "unwanted girls" in India.

Therefore, India needs to put in place the right policies to maximize the potential of its people by enhancing the state of education, health and infrastructure, so that India figures at better in various human development rankings.

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