

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

