



22-05-2024 NEWS

A declining fertility rate

- It is old news that India has come to the top of the world in terms of population.
- But the new news that many fail to notice is that India's population growth rate is lower than before.
- The fertility rate (Total fertility rate) has decreased globally, but it has decreased dramatically in Asian countries like India.
- It must be said that it is a very contradictory phenomenon in their trend of stability in population growth.

What is the definition?

- Total Fertility rate is the average number of children a woman has in her lifetime.
- A related term is rate of substitution (Replacement level) represents population proportion that needs to be filled when people die.
- This ratio is falling in Asian countries.
- The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington collects data on health loss globally.
- These are published under the name Global Burden of Disease Survey.
- The findings were recently published in the medical journal Lancet. Asian countries establish that fertility rates are low.
- The UN defines it as a country with a fertility rate below 2.1, unable to have enough children to carry on from one generation to the next.
- Fertility rates have been reduced by population control measures.
- A target of 2.1 was earlier aimed at reducing the population ratio in India. It is worrisome that it has fallen beyond the target.

Influencing Factors:

- Fertility rate among rural women in India is 2.1 and 1.6 in urban areas.
- Education also plays a role, women who had schooling had a fertility rate of 2.8 and women with more than a school education had a fertility rate of 1.8.
- Fertility rates among poorer women are higher than those of higher economic status
- The poorest have a higher rate of 2.6 and the middle class have a TFR of 1.9 and the upper class have a TFR of 1.6.

State of Asian Countries:

- Fertility rates fell due to China's strict family control policies in the 1980s.
- After this, China has announced that two children can be received in 2020 and three children in 2021.
- Antipathy toward women in South Korea. Another reason for the low fertility rate. Women shunned childbearing to escape the pressure of heavy work both at home and in the office.
- This trend turned into a covert no-marriage movement. The South Korean government, realizing that this had an impact on fertility rates, decided to encourage marriage and childbirth.
- Asian countries currently have declining fertility rates. Hong Kong has set aside a large amount for rent.
- It is due to the people that even the minimum housing facilities required to raise a child are not available.
- Seeing that this is affecting the birth of children, the government administration arranges a house for the child to be born at a subsidized rent.

- The government creates a savings account for a child born in Singapore.
- The stipend is provided till the child reaches the age of higher education in Japan.

Status of Tamil Nadu

- The first National Family Health Survey published in 1992-1993 recorded the female fertility rate in Tamil Nadu at 2.5.
- According to the National Family Health Survey data for 2019-2021, Tamil Nadu's fertility rate had dropped to 1.8.
- It is 1.6 in urban areas and 1.9 in rural areas. This is a slight increase from the ratio of 1.7 recorded in the survey data for 2015-2016 in the next survey.

India's ranking in the Tourism Index

- The World Economic Forum has published the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024, which ranks the countries of the world in terms of tourism activities.
- India, which was at 54th position in 2021, has now moved up to 39th position in this list.
- America tops the index followed by Spain, Japan, France and Australia.

Social Justice in Business

- In the context where the contribution of Scheduled Caste- Scheduled Tribes people in the industrial sector has been largely confined to shop workers, the Tamil Nadu government's plan has brought about a hopeful change.
- While it used to be the case that people's efforts to raise investment and get bank loans ended at the initial stage, The Tamil Nadu Government on December 6, 2023 on Ambedkar's memorial day, launched the Annal Ambedkar Business Champions Scheme, has led to this change.
- The scheme provides investment opportunities for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to start businesses and expand existing businesses.
- The Tamil Nadu government has recently announced that 1,303 people have received Rs 134.86 crore as investment grants through this.
- This program fosters social justice through industrial development.
- Apart from the already existing credit schemes for industries directly related to agriculture, this scheme provides an opportunity to start more than 50 industries.
- The project has created an environment that promotes the economic development of the community. Accordingly, the Government of Tamil Nadu subsidizes 35% of the project estimate for an industry.
- The remaining 65% is borrowed from nationalized banks at low interest rates.
- Another highlight is the 6% return on the interest amount for regular interest payments for investments between Rs 10 lakh and Rs 1.5 crore.
- The repayment period of the loan is up to 10 years.
- Within three months of the scheme being announced, 127 people received a total of Rs 45 crore as investment. 100 beneficiaries got approval orders on the first day itself.
- The fact that they are mentored at all stages, including marketing and reaching the next level, is a testament to the professionalism of the program.
- A national level scheme for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes was brought by the Central Government in 2016.
- It also leads to the purchase of their products, along with business-oriented collaborations.
- 25 percent of the procurement by the government departments is earmarked for the production of small and medium enterprises and 4 percent for the oppressed sections of them.
- Such procurement opportunities should also be vigorously implemented in the Annal Ambedkar scheme.
- The fact that 288 of the 1,303 beneficiaries are women makes the program's operation even more meaningful.
- May the Tamil Nadu government's journey to implement social justice in the industrial sector be successful.

Eradication of Manual Scavengers

- If the persons involved in the manual waste removal industry die on the job, die while working, or are severely disabled, a criminal case should be registered against the officers in charge, municipal commissioner, panchayat president etc.
- However, a First Information Record (FIR) is lodged only against a lower level employee or a wage worker of a contractor.
- "This is very unfortunate. This scourge of manual waste disposal should be eradicated by 2026" - Chief Justice of Madras High Court Sanjay V. Gangapoorwala, Justice Satyanarayana noted.
- According to Wikipedia, the term "Manual Scavengers" is only used in India.

Contradicting Reports

- A few years ago, the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis reported that one person dies every five days while cleaning the drains.
- Bezwada Wilson says that it is a crime of the government. He is engaged in a life-long struggle against this abomination.
- The reality may be even worse because many districts of the country have falsely reported that this scourge has been eradicated in their areas.
- From 1993 to 2022, the commission says at least 1054 have died.
- Based on the 2017-2018 statistics, the organization says that the average age of those who die on the job is 32.
- According to an estimate by the central government, 971 people have died while cleaning sewers from 1993-2021.
- The Socio-Economic Caste Census found that 1,80,657 households in India are engaged in manual scavenging (Socio Economic Caste Census 2011).

What does the law say?

- The first act is the Employment of manual scavengers and the Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993. Violators of this Act shall be liable to imprisonment and fine.
- It is sad that in 20 years no one has been punished under this law.
- Therefore, the Act was amended and passed as Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
- But both of these are defunct like many other laws for the oppressed.

Contribution of PS Krishnan

- The late IAS officer PS Krishnan worked for many years to enact the above two Acts.
- Only a few of his many suggestions for framing each law were adopted.

Things to do

- As the first priority, sewerage like other countries, cleaning of toilets and cesspools should be fully mechanized.
- Once manual scavengers are rescued from this industry, they should be employed in alternative industries.
- There should be a situation where no one is available to do such work.

Prohibition of Weapons in Outer Space

- The UN has approved a draft resolution brought by Russia to ban the installation of nuclear weapons in outer space. The Security Council rejected it.
- In the 15-member council, 7 countries including the United States voted against the resolution, while 7 countries including Russia and China voted in favor of the resolution. Switzerland ignored the voting.
- UN Resolutions in the Security Council require a minimum of 9 votes to pass.
- Russia's resolution failed because it did not fulfill that provision.