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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**India's fall in fertility rate
may be a boon in disguise**

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INDIA'S FALL IN FERTILITY RATE MAY BE A BOON IN DISGUISE

In Context

- Recent study by Lancet on global fertility rates suggests that India's TFR has been seeing a decline over the last century.

Do you know?

- The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is a standard demographic indicator used internationally to estimate the average number of children that a woman would have over her childbearing years

Finding

- The total fertility rate (TFR) for India is projected to go down to **1.29 by 2051 from 6.18 children per woman in 1950**.
 - This estimate is based on a complex demographic modelling, done for 204 countries as part of the global burden of disease study.
 - The decline is uneven across states and it will take a decade before all states, especially large ones like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, achieve the replacement level fertility, which, in the long run, would ensure stabilisation of population
- The **projection by the UN Population Division** is that India will have a population of close to 1.7 billion by 2065 before it starts declining.

Causes

- Several factors have jointly triggered a demographic transition in India, the rapid **pace of economic development**, particularly since the early years of the present century.
- Lower infant and child mortality rates** reduce the need to have a large family for old-age support, **backed by the rise in women's education** and **work participation rates** and the increasing usage of modern contraception methods.
- Improvement in housing conditions** and the old-age security system are the other contributing factors.
- Various factors, including obesity, stress, smoking, and environmental pollution, contribute to the declining fertility rates in India

Impacts

- Positives** : The first impact of the rapid decline in TFR is a **fall in the dependency rate** and a **larger share of working adults in the population**, leading to an **overall surplus income** which can **accelerate economic growth** and lead to **positive intergenerational transfers**.
 - The demographic transition will have a positive impact on several states in the coming years through an **increase in labour productivity**
 - The decline in population growth would increase the **amount of capital resources and infrastructure** available in per capita terms.
 - The reduction in fertility would permit the **relocation of resources for the education and skill development** of children rather than expanding the coverage for achieving universalisation.
- Negatives**: It will subsequently result in a **larger share of the elderly dependent population**, as is noted in China, Japan and several European countries.
 - The dependency ratio, taking the young and the old as a fraction of the percentage of the working-age population, is projected to go up from **13.8 in 2011 to 23 in 2036 for India**.

- ◆ It can trigger potential social imbalances due to gender preferences in the country.
- ◆ Emerging population issues have serious implications for policy, particularly for skill development for women and other underprivileged groups.

Conclusion and Way Forward

- **Economic policies that stimulate growth and job creation**, alongside social security and pension reforms are essential in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of declining fertility rates.
- With an ageing population, which will have to be supported in the coming decades by a shrinking workforce, it becomes imperative that India's economy grows at a strong pace consistently over decades.
 - ◆ There is also a need to generate employment opportunities that effectively utilize the skills of this demographic.
- **Skill development** can ensure there is no dearth of labour in the modern growing sectors.

Mains Practise Question

[Q] Why fertility went down across the globe ?What falling total fertility rate will mean for India?

