



The myth of India's population explosion

It proposes doing government jobs, promotions, subsidies and the right to control local elections to anyone who has more than two children.

UP, which is home to over 200 million people, has long been a governance challenge and has consistently ranked low in development indices.

The experts say its population growth - like India's - is already slowing.

Experts have warned against a "one-size-fits-all" policy that forces women agency and further increases small or one-child abortions, given the deep-rooted and overwhelming preference for sons.

They are baffled by the bill, which has been drafted by the state's law commission, chief of which is K. J. Somaiya (UP population control policy which was released in May).

"The bill must consider or a meaningful population policy that addresses a wide range of issues including adolescent sexual and reproductive health, child and maternal mortality, and aging," said Pooja Mathia, executive director of Population Foundation of India.

Official counts show India's population is not exploding - on average, women in most states have been having fewer children than before, effectively flattening the growth curve.

UP has an 18% unemployment rate, the highest in the country. It is also one of the poorest states, with the lowest per capita income. It is also one of the most densely populated states, with the highest population density.

UP's fertility rate nearly halved from 4.2 in 1993 to 2.7 in 2018 - and is expected to reach 2.1 by 2025, according to a government projection.

Given the falling rates, "immigration is not a concern," said Pooja Mathia, executive director of Population Foundation of India.

She said that the government should focus on improving the health, child and maternal mortality, and aging, and women's agency, and not on one-child abortions, given the deep-rooted and overwhelming preference for sons.



Nearly half of the world's countries have seen an extraordinary decline in fertility rates. By 2025, the global fertility rate is expected to drop below replacement level, according to the UN.

China's fertility rate had dropped to 1.3 in 2020, which had a 2.2 as the last official count in 2016.

One reason, according to demographers, is the shifting context of India.

India's states - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh - that are home to roughly 40% of India's population also have fertility rates higher than the replacement level. 2.1. This is in sharp contrast with Kerala (1.8), Karnataka (1.7), Andhra Pradesh (1.7) and Odisha (1.5).

"Also, our cities are overcrowded and ill-planned. They

Turkey, Israel presidents hold rare telephone talks

Since the early 1990s, 12 states have introduced versions of the two-child policy.

Did it work?

There has been no independent evaluation either but a study in five of the states showed a real and sustained decline in fertility rates, and men divorcing their wives or giving up their children for adoption or for child care.

But the results are mixed - four states revealed the law, Bihar started in 2007 but still has the country's highest fertility rate (2.4), and Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have all seen remarkable drops in fertility rates with no such norms in place.

India is at a perfect stage as far as population distribution is concerned," Nagesh Sengupta, director of the Population Council's office in India, said.

Experts say India has entered a demographic dividend - the ability of a young and active workforce to propel economic growth and poverty. How India can harness this, especially in peripheral states like Uttar Pradesh, remains to be seen.

"We need to invest in education and health systems," Mr. Mathia said. "It can be done from Bangladesh and Vietnam, which had a similar demographic dividend but managed to get it right, or from South Korea, which had a similar demographic dividend but managed to get it wrong."



Rescuers pull 7 more from rubble of collapsed hotel in China

Rescuers have pulled seven more survivors from the rubble of a 15-story hotel in the eastern Chinese city of Beijing, state media said on Tuesday.

The Siji Kaiyuan hotel collapsed on Monday afternoon, with authorities initially saying one person had died.

On Tuesday, the state-run People's Daily newspaper said eight people had been confirmed dead, with 14 rescued. Nine people remain missing, it said.

No further information was given on what might have caused the collapse.

The three-story hotel had 54 guests rooms, according to its listing on the travel site Ctrip.

A resident said the building was about 30 years old and had been through a number of renovations. Sixteen floors, a new media center and a gym were added.

It was built in 1993 to 2.7 in 2018 - and is expected to reach 2.1 by 2025, according to a government projection.

Venezuela arrests Freddy Guevara for 'terrorism, treason'

More than 50 people have died after a fire broke out at a hospital in the eastern city of Nasiriyah, which is being run by the Islamic State group.

The cause of the fire is unclear, but initial reports suggest it began after an oxygen tank exploded.

Iraqi PM Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered the arrest of the head of the hospital, Relatives of patients have been protesting outside the building.

Rescuers were busy repairing of clothes with police and two police vehicles on site.

Freddy Guevara, a Venezuelan politician, was arrested on Tuesday for terrorism and treason.

The Venezuelan government has previously linked Guevara and his political allies to the kidnapping of a Venezuelan diplomat in Caracas.

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Iraq: Fire in Covid ward kills dozens at Nasiriyah hospital

The new ward had space for 50 beds and was built just two months ago, an official said.

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