Numbers game: On the State of World Population Report 2023 and the India projection

India needs to create **economic** opportunities to **reap** the **demographic dividend**

The latest State of World Population Report, an **authoritative** analysis by the UN, **has** officially **stamped** what has been known for a while: that India will become the most **populous** country in mid-2023, **surpassing** China's 142.5 crore by about 3 million. These **estimates** are based on official country data as well as **extrapolating** birth, **mortality** and international **migration** trends. India has had a **vacillating** relationship with the size of its population. In the '**socialist' era**, the growing population was a **convenient excuse** to explain India's **poverty** and the state's inability to improve average **standards of living**. These **seeded deranged 'sterilisation'** programmes that **violently compromised dignity** and freedom. **Globalisation** and the opening up of the economy in the 1990s saw India as a **vast**, **untapped** market, with '**fortunes at the bottom of the pyramid'** that **framed** population as an advantage. India's large working age **population** — or the demographic dividend — relative to the developed countries, where the workforce was **ageing**, **has** provided labour-wage **arbitrage** and valuable economic opportunities. Indian numbers are behind the skilled and unskilled labour that power workforces in West Asia and Africa, **undergird** business process **outsourcing** projects from developed European countries and the United States, and are increasingly a **significant** component of university **enrolment** abroad.

This relative **prosperity**, though unable to solve India's crisis of economic **inequality**, **has**, however, **busted the myth** of **forced** sterilisation and legal limits on family sizes being **key** to population control. Despite **overtaking** China, India's population growth is slowing. The National Family Health Survey reported in 2021 that the **total fertility rate** had, for the first time, **dipped** to below the replacement level of 2.1. India's population is **forecast** to grow from its current 1.4 billion to 1.67 billion in 2050 before **settling** at 1.53 billion in 2100, with the **peak** at 1.7 billion sometime in 2064, according to UN estimates. While the **pendulum** of opinion regarding population **has** swung from 'disadvantage' to 'advantage' in national **discourse**, it is relevant to analyse the question while **factoring in** newer **developments**. Earlier population **debates** did not **account for** the climate crisis and the fact that many **migrants**, after years of skilled and unskilled labour abroad, **were** becoming permanent **immigrants**: over 16 lakh Indians have **renounced** citizenship since 2011, including 2,25,620 people in 2022, the highest during the period, the External Affairs Minister told Parliament in February. **Economic opportunity**, more than national **pride**, **shapes** the working population's **aspiration** and, in its absence, a naturally **decelerating** population will be of limited advantage. **[Practice Exercise]**

- Red/blue coloring of words in the sentence indicates subject verb relationship; where 'red' denotes 'subject' and 'blue' denotes 'verb'.

Vocabulary

1. **State** (noun) – Nation, country, territory, region राज्य

2. **Projection** (noun) – Forecast, prediction, estimation, extrapolation अनुमान

3. **Economic** (adjective) – Financial, monetary, fiscal, commercial आर्थिक

4. **Reap** (verb) – Harvest, gather, obtain, collect पाना, प्राप्त करना

5. **Demographic dividend** (noun) – The economic growth potential that results from a shift in a population's age structure, typically when the working-age population is larger relative to the non-working age population. जनसांख्यिक लाभ

6. **Authoritative** (adjective) – Reliable, credible, trustworthy, dependable प्रामाणिक

7. **Stamp** (verb) – Confirm, endorse, validate, certify मुहर लगाना

8. **Populous** (adjective) – Crowded, densely populated, heavily populated, teeming बहुजन

9. **Surpass** (verb) – Exceed, outdo, outstrip, eclipse पार करना

10. **Estimate** (noun) – Approximation, assessment, evaluation, calculation अनुमान

11. **Extrapolate** (verb) – Infer, deduce, extend, project अनुमान लगाना

12. **Mortality** (noun) – Death rate, fatality, death, loss of life मृत्यु दर

13. **Migration** (noun) – Movement, relocation, resettlement, displacement प्रवास

14. **Vacillating** (adjective) – Hesitant, wavering, indecisive, uncertain संकोची

15. **Socialist** (adjective) – a person who believes in or belongs to a party that supports socialism समाजवादी

16. **Era** (noun) – Period, age, epoch, time युग

17. **Convenient** (adjective) – Suitable, appropriate, fitting, opportune सुविधाजनक

18. **Excuse** (noun) – Justification, explanation, defense, pretext बहाना

19. **Poverty** (noun) – Impoverishment, destitution, penury, indigence गरीबी

20. **Standard of living** (noun) – Quality of life, level of comfort, lifestyle, living conditions जीवन स्तर

21. **Seed** (verb) – Plant, sow, introduce, initiate बीज बोना, जन्म देना

22. **Deranged** (adjective) – Disturbed, unbalanced, unhinged, insane अस्त-व्यस्त

23. **Sterilisation** (noun) – Disinfection, sanitization, purification, decontamination नसबंदी

24. **Violently** (adverb) – Forcefully, fiercely, aggressively, brutally हिंसक ढंग से

25. **Compromise** (verb) – Undermine, weaken, jeopardize, endanger समझौता करना

26. **Dignity** (noun) – self-respect, self-esteem, honor, integrity गरिमा

27. **Globalisation** (noun) – The process by which businesses, organizations, and nations increasingly interact and integrate with one another on a global scale, driven by international trade, investment, and advancements in technology. वैश्वीकरण

28. **Vast** (adjective) – immense, extensive, expansive, enormous विशाल

29. **Untapped** (adjective) – unexploited, unutilized, undeveloped, unused अप्रयुक्त

30. **Fortune** (noun) – wealth, riches, prosperity, abundance समृद्धि

31. **At the bottom of the pyramid** (phrase) – lowest socioeconomic group, economically disadvantaged, lowest economic class आर्थिक रूप से वंचित लोग

32. **Frame** (verb) – present, outline, formulate, shape प्रस्तुत करना

33. **Ageing** (adjective) – getting older, aging, growing old, maturing बुढ़ापा

34. **Arbitrage** (noun) – riskless profit, speculation, financial gain अंतरपणन

35. **Undergird** (adjective) – support, strengthen, reinforce, bolster समर्थन करना

36. **Outsource** (verb) – subcontract, delegate, assign, contract out बाहरी स्रोत करना

37. **Significant** (adjective) – important, consequential, noteworthy, major महत्वपूर्ण

38. **Enrollment** (noun) – registration, matriculation, signing up, admission नामांकन

39. **Prosperity** (noun) – affluence, wealth, success, opulence समृद्धि

40. **Inequality** (noun) – disparity, disproportion, imbalance, unevenness असमानता

41. **Bust the myth** (phrase) – debunk, disprove, expose, invalidate मिथक को खंडन करना

42. **Forced** (adjective) – coerced, compelled, involuntary, obligatory बलपूर्वक

43. **Key** (adjective) – crucial, important, essential, critical महत्वपूर्ण

44. **Overtake** (verb) – surpass, outdo, outstrip, exceed आगे निकलना

45. **Total fertility rate** (noun) – average number of children born per woman कुल प्रजनन दर

46. **Dip** (verb) – decline, decrease, reduce, diminish कमी आना

47. **Forecast** (verb) – predict, project, estimate, anticipate अनुमान करना

48. **Settle** (verb) – stabilize, level out, become stable, reach a steady state स्थायी होना

49. **Peak** (noun) – pinnacle, apex, summit, zenith चरम

50. **Swing the pendulum** (phrase) – reverse a trend, change direction, shift in opinion or policy लोकाभिप्राय या नीति में परिवर्तन

51. **Discourse** (noun) – conversation, discussion, dialogue, communication, exchange संवाद

52. **Factor in** (phrasal verb) – include, take into account, consider, incorporate, accommodate शामिल करना

53. **Development** (noun) – Event, happening, occurrence, incident, stage घटनाक्रम

54. **Debate** (noun) – argument, discussion, controversy, discourse, deliberation बहस

55. **Account for** (phrasal verb) – explain, justify, give a reason for, clarify, elucidate के लिये उत्तरदयी होना

56. **Migrant** (noun) – A person who moves from one place to another, typically to find work or better living conditions. प्रवासी

57. **Immigrant** (noun) – A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country. आप्रवासी

58. **Renounce** (verb) – abandon, relinquish, give up, reject, disown त्यागना

59. **Pride** (noun) – self-respect, dignity, self-esteem, honor, self-worth गर्व

60. **Aspiration** (noun) – ambition, goal, objective, aim, desire महत्वाकांक्षा

61. **Decelerating** (adjective) – slowing down, reducing speed, losing momentum, braking घटती

Summary of the Editorial

1. UN's State of World Population Report 2023 confirms India will become the most populous country by mid-2023.

2. India's population will surpass China's 142.5 crore by approximately 3 million.

3. Estimates are based on country data, birth, mortality, and migration trends.

4. India's growing population was once blamed for poverty and inability to improve living standards.

5. Forced sterilization programs compromised dignity and freedom in the past.

6. Globalization in the 1990s framed India's population as an advantage, with vast economic opportunities.

7. India's large working age population offers a demographic dividend and labor-wage arbitrage.

8. Indian workers power economies in West Asia, Africa, and Europe, as well as contribute to global university enrollment.

9. India's economic growth has not fully addressed economic inequality.

10. Forced sterilization and legal family size limits are no longer viewed as key to population control.

11. India's population growth is slowing, with a fertility rate dipping below the replacement level of 2.1.

12. Population projections: 1.67 billion in 2050, 1.53 billion in 2100, and a peak of 1.7 billion in 2064.

13. Climate crisis and permanent immigration are new factors in population debates.

14. Over 16 lakh Indians have renounced citizenship since 2011.

15. Economic opportunity, rather than national pride, shapes aspirations and impacts the advantage of a decelerating population.

Practice Exercise

1. **According to the passage, which factor has contributed to India's economic opportunities in relation to developed countries?**   **[Editorial page]**
   A. India's large consumer market
   B. India's large working age population
   C. India's business process outsourcing projects
   D. India's high university enrolment abroad

2. **Which of the following statement is not true with respect to the passage?**
   (i) India's population is forecast to peak at 1.7 billion in 2064.
   (ii) The climate crisis was factored into earlier population debates.
   (iii) Economic opportunity plays a major role in shaping the working population's aspiration.
       A. (i), (ii)
       B. (ii) only
       C. (iii) only
       D. (i), (ii), (iii)

3. **Which statement best describes the change in perception of India's population over time?**
   A. India's population has always been considered a disadvantage.
   B. India's population was seen as an advantage in the socialist era and a disadvantage during globalization.
   C. India's population was seen as a disadvantage in the socialist era but an advantage during globalization.
   D. The perception of India's population has remained unchanged over time.

4. **What is the tone of the passage?**
   A. Optimistic
   B. Pessimistic
   C. Analytical
   D. Sarcastic

5. **What is the main theme of the passage?**
   A. The impact of globalization on India's economy
   B. The evolution of population control measures in India
   C. The role of Indian migrants in the global labor market
   D. India's changing perspective on its population size and its implications

6. Which of the following words is a synonym for "**vacillating**" as used in the passage?
   A. Unstable
   B. Persistent
   C. Consistent
   D. Unwavering

7. What is a synonym for the term "**arbitrage**" used in the context of the passage?
   A. Exploitation
   B. Cooperation
   C. Collaboration

    D. Equality

8. Identify the antonym for the term "**overtaking**" used in the context of the passage:
    A. Surpassing
    B. Outdoing
    C. Exceeding
    D. Falling behind

9. **Which idiom best describes the situation where India's population was once considered a disadvantage but is now considered an advantage in the passage?**
    A. A blessing in disguise
    B. The pendulum has swung
    C. Turning over a new leaf
    D. Once in a blue moon

10. **Which phrasal verb can be inferred from the passage to describe India's population growth rate in recent years?**
    A. Speed up
    B. Cut down
    C. Slow down
    D. Break away

11. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. India, Japan and France have set up a common platform for talks among Sri Lanka's creditors to work out ways to restructure the country's external debt.
    Q. These developments are essential to help Lanka tide over economic distress.
    R. This follows the announcement of a $2. 9 billion package by IMF last month
    S. Unable to raise external finance for a while, it resorted to deficit financing

      A. QRSP   B.QSRP   C.PSQR   D.PRQS

12. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. It's disappointing that the defence ministry has refused sanction for prosecution of 30 army commandos allegedly responsible for the Oting massacre in Nagaland in December 2021.
    Q. Recall that the commando unit had opened fire and killed six coal miners in a botched counter-insurgency operation in Oting.
    R. Another seven civilians were killed in subsequent clashes with security forces.
    S. The episode highlighted precisely why AFSPA is seen as a draconian law giving sweeping powers to security personnel.

      A. PQRS   B.PQSR   C.RPSQ   D.SPRQ

13. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
    P. Between 2011 and 2022, light pollution grew by roughly 9. 6% a year.
    Q. Artificial light is all around us, bedazzling and blinding, but we've lost sight of the stars.
    R. Even inside, there is no respite from glowing devices, laptops, phones and screens.
    S. Streetlights, floodlights, headlights, our buildings glitter with light.

A. QRSP   B.QPSR   C.QSRP   D.SPRQ

14. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
   P. In another case (Pramod Singla vs UoI), the bench pointed out that India's preventive detention laws are a colonial legacy with a potential to be misused
   Q. Two separate cases in the Supreme Court this week highlighted the abuse of India's web of preventive detention laws that confer the executive with extraordinary powers
   R. In one case, SC ticked off the UP government for inappropriately invoking the
   S. National Security Act in a case with political undertones

   A. SRPQ   B.QRSP   C.SRQP   D.SPRQ

15. **Arrange the following sentences to form a coherent paragraph.**
   P. India's rural areas showed a significant BMI disadvantage in the 1990s.
   Q. That's the glass half full. On the half empty side, children growing up in cities are not showing the expected growth.
   R. But with improvements in sanitation, nutrition and healthcare, successive cohorts of children and adolescents have narrowed the rural lag.
   S. Is it better to grow up in a city or a village?

   A. RSPQ   B.QPSR   C.QSRP   D.SPRQ

Comprehension

THANKS to the enormous balance sheets, Big Tech has historically been a _____1_____industry, absorbing most of the economic shocks. It is also considered a bellwether for decisions on corporate spending and hiring. As the growth-oriented technology industry _____2_____one of its worst contractions, with mass layoffs over the span of a few months, there is a sense of panic and anxiety. The _____3_____ is being viewed as an instance of social contagion — companies imitating what others are doing. Facing criticism, the tech giants are projecting the staff _____4_____ as a course correction following a period of aggressive scaling up and bolstering of workforce during the pandemic. Amid predictions of a recession and a severe economic downturn in the West, the belt-tightening, it is argued, sends a message to shareholders of putting the brakes on any needless spending. The jury is out on whether the approach is _____5_____or myopic.

Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate combinations of words

16. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 1.**
   A. Outright
   B. Resilient
   C. Inherent
   D. Liable

17. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 2.**
   A. Confronts
   B. Deflate

C. Exploit

D. Bolster

18. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 3**.

A. Incentive

B. Collaboration

C. Shakeout

D. Scenario

19. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 4**.

A. Adversity

B. Sackings

C. Assistance

D. Call

20. **Select the most appropriate option to fill in blank 5**.

A. Opportune

B. Inevitable

C. Grim

D. Prudent

Answers

1. B   2.B   3.C   4. C   5. D   6. A   7. A   8.D   9.B   10.C   11.D
12. A   13.C   14.B   15.D   16.B   17.A   18.C   19.B   20.D   **[Practice Exercise]**

Explanations

1. B) The passage states that India's large working age population, also referred to as the demographic dividend, has provided labor-wage arbitrage and valuable economic opportunities. This is in relation to developed countries, where the workforce is ageing.

2. B) The passage states that earlier population debates did not account for the climate crisis.

3. C) In the given passage, it is mentioned that during the socialist era, India's growing population was considered a reason for the nation's poverty and the government's inability to improve the average standard of living. This perception led to forced sterilization programs. However, with the advent of globalization in the 1990s, India's population was seen as an advantage, with a vast untapped market and a large working-age population that provided labor-wage arbitrage and valuable economic opportunities.

4. C) The passage discusses the implications of India becoming the most populous country and its changing relationship with its population size. The tone is analytical as it presents various aspects of the issue, such as the historical context, economic opportunities, and challenges, as well as the impact on migration and population control measures.

5. D) The passage primarily discusses India's changing perspective on its population size, from considering it a disadvantage during the socialist era to an advantage in the context of globalization. It also analyzes various implications of India becoming the most populous country, such as economic opportunities, challenges, and its impact on migration and population control measures.

6. A) In the passage, "**vacillating**" refers to the changing and uncertain nature of India's relationship with its population size. The word "unstable" is a synonym, as it also implies a lack of steadiness or consistency.

7. A) In the passage, "**labour-wage arbitrage**" refers to the practice of taking advantage of differences in labor costs between countries. The word "exploitation" is a synonym, as it also implies taking advantage of a situation for profit or benefit.

8. D) In the passage, the term "**overtaking**" refers to India surpassing China's population. The antonym "**falling behind**" implies the opposite, suggesting that something is lagging or not keeping up.

9. B) The idiom **"the pendulum has swung"** best describes the situation in the passage, as it indicates that opinions or circumstances have changed significantly from one extreme to another. In this case, the pendulum of opinion regarding India's population has shifted from viewing it as a disadvantage to an advantage.

10. C) The passage mentions that "Despite overtaking China, India's population growth is slowing" and that "the total fertility rate had, for the first time, dipped to below the replacement level of 2.1." This information supports the inference that India's population growth rate has been slowing down in recent years, which corresponds to the phrasal verb "slow down."

11. **PRQS**

India, Japan and France have set up a common platform for talks among Sri Lanka's creditors to work out ways to restructure the country's external debt. This follows the announcement of a $2. 9 billion package by IMF last month. These developments are essential to help Lanka tide over economic distress. Unable to raise external finance for a while, it resorted to deficit financing.

12. **PQRS**

It's disappointing that the defence ministry has refused sanction for prosecution of 30 army commandos allegedly responsible for the Oting massacre in Nagaland in December 2021. Recall that the commando unit had opened fire and killed six coal miners in a botched counter-insurgency operation in Oting. Another seven civilians were killed in subsequent clashes with security forces. The episode highlighted precisely why AFSPA is seen as a draconian law giving sweeping powers to security personnel.

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Artificial light is all around us, bedazzling and blinding, but we've lost sight of the stars. Streetlights, floodlights, headlights, our buildings glitter with light. Even inside, there is no respite from glowing devices, laptops, phones and screens. Between 2011 and 2022, light pollution grew by roughly 9. 6% a year

14. QRSP

Two separate cases in the Supreme Court this week highlighted the abuse of India's web of preventive detention laws that confer the executive with extraordinary powers. In one case, SC ticked off the UP government for inappropriately invoking the National Security Act in a case with political undertones. In another case (Pramod Singla vs UoI), the bench pointed out that India's preventive detention laws are a colonial legacy with a potential to be misused

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Is it better to grow up in a city or a village? India's rural areas showed a significant BMI disadvantage in the 1990s. But with improvements in sanitation, nutrition and healthcare, successive cohorts of children and adolescents have narrowed the rural lag. That's the glass half full. On the half empty side, children growing up in cities are not showing the expected growth.
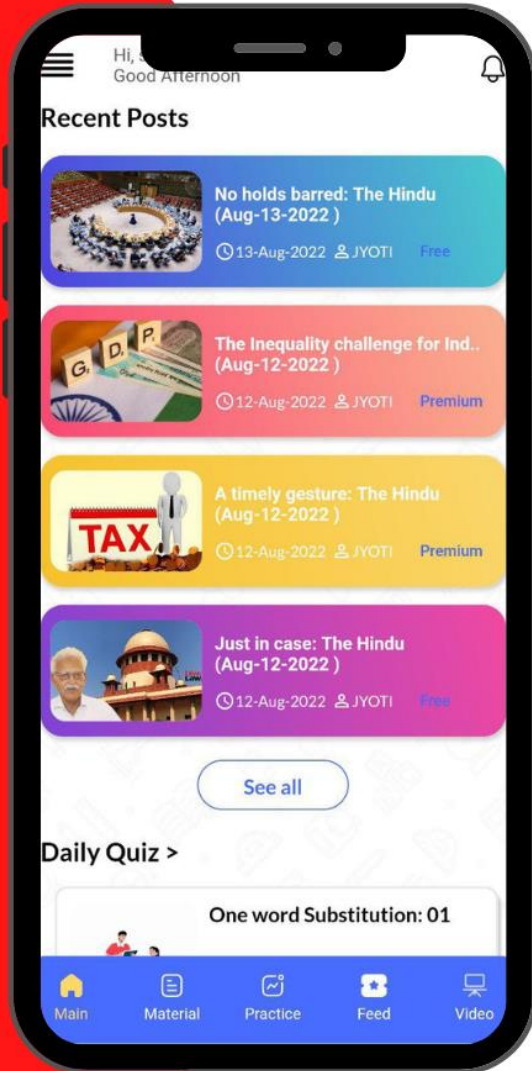
16. **Resilient** (adjective) – Strong, robust, buoyant, durable मजबूत

- **Outright** (adjective) – complete, total, absolute, unconditional, unequivocal पूर्णतः

- **Inherent** (adjective) – an essential and inseparable part of something. निहित

- **Liable** (adjective) – Legally responsible for something. उत्तरदायी

17. **Confront** (verb) – Tackle, Meet, Face, Encounter, Handle सामना करना

- **Deflate** (verb) – Decrease, reduce, lower, shrink घटना

- **Exploit** (verb) – Use or manipulate to one's advantage लाभ उठाना

- **Bolster** (verb) – strengthen, reinforce, encourage, support, augment, sustain मजबूत करना

18. **Shakeout** (noun) – a situation in which people lose their jobs, or companies stop doing business, because of economic difficulties हलचल

    - **Incentive** (noun) – motivation, motive, reason, stimulus, प्रोत्साहन

    - **Collaboration** (noun) – cooperation, alliance, partnership, participation सहयोग

    - **Scenario** (noun) – sequence of events, series of developments, situation परिदृश्य

19. **Sacking** (noun) – an act of dismissing someone; dismissal, firing बर्खास्त करना

    - **Adversity** (noun) – Hardship, difficulty, danger, misfortune, harsh condition विपत्ति

    - **Assistance** (noun) – help, support, backing, succor, encouragement सहायता

    - **Call** (noun) – demand, Request, plea, appeal मांग

20. **Prudent** (adjective) – careful, judicious, wise, cautious, sensible विवेकी, चतुर

    - **Opportune** (adjective) – appropriate, favorable, apt, suitable, auspicious, convenient समयानुकूल

    - **Inevitable** (adjective) – unavoidable, inescapable, bound to happen, sure to happen अपरिहार्य

    - **Grim** (adjective) – serious, severe, stern, depressing, hopeless गंभीर

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