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Topic: Population Policies of India

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Population Policies formulated to address the unmet needs for contraception, health care infrastructure, and health personnel, and to provide integrated service delivery for basic reproductive and child health care. The main objective is to achieve a stable population at a level consistent with the requirements of sustainable economic growth, social development, and environmental protection.

Five-Year Plans by the Government of India for population control

First Five Year Plan: India is the first country in the world to begin a population control programme in 1952. It emphasized the use of natural devices for family planning.

Second Five Year Plan: Work was done in the direction of education and research and the clinical approach was encouraged.

Third Five Year Plan: In 1965, the sterilization technique for both men and women was adopted under this plan. The technique of copper- T was also adopted. An independent department called the Family Planning Department was set up.

Fourth Five-Year Plan: All kinds of birth control methods (conventional and modern) were encouraged.

Fifth Five Year Plan: Under this plan the National Population Policy was announced on 16 April, 1976. In this policy, the minimum age for marriage determined by the Sharda Act, 1929 was increased. It increased the age for boys from 18 to 21 years and for girls from 14 to 18 years. The number of MPs and MLAs was fixed till the year 2001 on the basis of the census 1971. Under this Plan, forced sterilization was permitted which was later on given up. In 1977, the Janata Party government changed the name of Family Planning Department to Family Welfare Department.

In the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Plans, efforts were done to control population by determining long-term demographic aims.

Ninth Five-Year Plan: In 1993, the government had established an expert group under the chairmanship of M.S. Swaminathan for formulating national population policy. Though this group had prepared the draft of the new population policy in 1994, it was reviewed in 1999 by the Family Welfare Department and was passed by the Parliament in 2000. The Central Government formulated the 'new national population policy' in February 2000. This policy has three main objectives:

Objectives of Ninth Five Year Plan

1. Temporary objective: The easy supply of birth control devices was included in it. Besides, the development of health protection framework and recruitment of health workers were also made a part of it.

2. Middle-term objective: Under it, the total fertility rate (TFR) had to bring down to the replacement level of 2.1 by 2010.

3. Long-term objective: Under it, the Objective of population stabilization by 2045 is to be achieved.

The population has to be stabilised at that level which must be harmonious from the points of view of economic and social development and environmental protection.

It has been announced in the new population policy to keep the composition of the Lok Sabha unchanged by 2026 so that the states could co-operate without any fear. Under current provisions, the number of MPs in different states by 2001 has been determined on the basis of the census 1971. It was to be changed in 2001 on the basis of the new census report (2001). But it might be harmful to those states which had taken part in the population control programme with great fervour. Those states which had not laid proper attention on population control could get more shares in the Lok Sabha resulting in wrong effect on the population control programme. So, the Lok Sabha would not have more than 553 elected seats till 2026 and the number of Lok Sabha seats of each state would remain the same as it is at present. While announcing this new policy, the Central Health Minister said that the people living below poverty line would be rewarded properly if they would marry after 21 years, adopt the standard of two children and undergo sterilisation after two children.

The following major Objectives had been set in the National Population Policy till the year 2010:

1. The 'total fertility rate' to be reduced to 2.1.
2. The high class birth control services had to be made available publically so that the standard of two children could be adopted.
3. The infant mortality rate had to be reduced to 30 per thousand.
4. The mother mortality rate had also to be reduced to below 100 per one lakh.
5. The late marriage of girls had to be encouraged.

A high level 100-membered National Population Commission has been set up under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister on 11 May 2000 to supervise and analyse the implementation of this new population policy.