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The India Meteorological Department (IMD), established in 1875, will celebrate 150 years of service on January 15, marking its contributions to weather forecasting and climate services.

Banking on technology, India's weatherman to turn 150 on Jan. 15

K.C. Deepika
BENGALURU

From a common conversation starter to the deciding factor for agricultural output, weather occupies an important place. And, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has been telling people about sunny, rainy, and wintry days for over a century now. Come January 15, and the IMD, established in 1875, will be completing 150 years of service.

According to the department, the IMD is one of the earliest government departments created for systematic observation, regular reporting, and scientific forecasting of weather in the Indian subcontinent.

In terms of infrastructure, India has some of the oldest meteorological observatories in the world.

The instrumental era of science and meteorology in India commenced with the establishment of the first Meteorological and Astronomical Observatory in (then) Madras in 1793. While the number gradually increased since then, the standards of instruments, and the time of observations were not fixed and the observations could not be utilised for predicting purposes.

There have been significant improvements in communication, weather modelling, and infrastructure in recent times. S. MAHINSHA

Among its major breakthroughs through its evolution were the preparation of the first chart in 1877, preparation of the first Daily Weather Report in 1878, preparation of climatology based on long-term observational data, followed by the commencement of radar age and flood Met services between 1947-1959, the commencement of the global satellite era in 1960-1970, global monitoring and better forecasting up to 24 hours in 1971-1983, the Indian Satellite era in 1984-1990, and the age of modernisation in 2006-13.

Between 2014 and 2023, there was rapid advancement in observation, communication and modelling facilities, paradigm shift in forecasting accuracy and services, and significant improvement in all fronts, including meteorological observations, communication, modelling, and infrastructure.

"Accordingly, there was rapid enhancement of weather and climate services and also the forecast accuracy improved by 40-50%," explained an IMD document.

The IMD today is manned by over 4,000 scientific personnel and boasts advanced meteorological instruments, state-of-the-art computing platforms, weather and climate prediction models, information processing and forecasting systems, and warning dissemination systems. With its headquarters in Delhi, it has six Regional Meteorological Centres (RMCs) catering to six regions of the country, which are further assisted by 26 Meteorological Centres (MCs) at the State level.

C.S. Patil, Scientist and Director, IMD Bengaluru, said now, with changes in weather patterns, increase in temperature, and an increasing number of extreme weather events across the world, the importance of the Met Department and its work has been cemented further.

"Meteorological services are today utilised in various sectors such as aviation, shipping, fisheries, flood management, and agriculture," he said.

India Meteorological Department (IMD):

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) was established in 1875 and is one of the earliest government departments in India for systematic weather observation and forecasting.
- **Headquarters: New Delhi.**
  - The IMD has contributed significantly to weather prediction and climate services for over 150 years, with its foundation laid through early meteorological observatories in the country.
  - The first Meteorological and Astronomical Observatory was set up in Madras in 1793, marking the beginning of instrumental meteorology in India.
- **IMD's major breakthroughs include:**
  - Preparation of the first weather chart (1877) and Daily Weather Report (1878).
  - Establishment of climatology based on long-term data and the commencement of radar services (1947-1959).
  - The global satellite era (1960-1970) and modernisation (2006-2013), improving forecasting accuracy by 40-50%.
  - IMD is equipped with over 4,000 scientific personnel, advanced meteorological instruments, and modern forecasting and warning systems.
  - It provides services across sectors like aviation, shipping, agriculture, flood management, and fisheries.

Page 07 : GS 2 & 3 : International Relations & Environment

Four major United Nations-led summits on biodiversity (Colombia), climate (Azerbaijan), land degradation (Saudi Arabia), and plastics (South Korea) failed to produce significant outcomes.

Four UN environmental summits fell short in 2024. What happened?

At the heart of the breakdown lies a divergence in national priorities. Developing nations, grappling with developmental challenges, economic constraints, and the effects of climate change, have repeatedly demanded more technology and financial support from developed countries

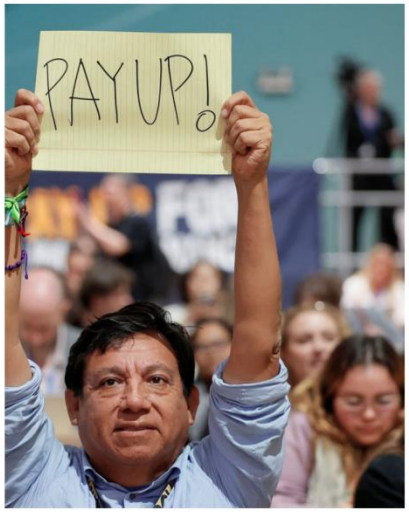
Indu K. Murthy

The United Nations' efforts to address critical environmental challenges hit multiple roadblocks this year, with four key summits – in Colombia on biodiversity, Azerbaijan on climate, Saudi Arabia on land degradation, and South Korea on plastics – failing to deliver meaningful outcomes.

These meetings brought together governments, researchers, policymakers, industries, and civil society organisations to ensure their goals were aligned, build equitable accountability, and mobilise adequate finance for action. But all four summits achieved no or partial success on issues they had set to address. In fact, this is the fourth time UN discussions designed to push countries toward significant progress in addressing biodiversity loss, climate change, and plastic pollution have either ended without consensus or yielded unsatisfactory outcomes.

This is a significant setback in global efforts to address biodiversity loss and climate change, potentially leading to delayed action on critical issues such as climate finance, drought mitigation, and plastic pollution, with the most vulnerable countries potentially suffering the greatest impact.

The partial or full failures of these talks raise pressing concerns about the global community's ability to combat biodiversity loss, climate change, and other urgent environmental crises. Understanding the reasons behind these setbacks and their implications for global cooperation is essential to charting a more effective path forward.



An activist at the 'People's Plenary' of the COP29 United Nations climate change conference in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November. REUTERS

In Azerbaijan, countries were divided over fossil fuels. The plastic pollution talks in South Korea also concluded without agreement because countries that rely on an ongoing demand for plastics opposed a legally binding treaty

Divergent national interests

At the heart of the talks' breakdown lies a stark and growing divergence in national priorities. Developing nations, grappling with developmental challenges, economic constraints, and the impacts of climate change, have repeatedly demanded more technology transfer and financial support from developed countries. But developed nations are reluctant to commit additional resources, citing domestic political pressures and economic challenges of their own.

For example, the Colombia talks on biodiversity conservation faltered as countries failed to agree on financing mechanisms to support sustainable land-use practices. Financing conservation at scale came to a gridlock with countries lagging in ambition, being nowhere close to delivering the $700 billion-a-year requirement. In Azerbaijan, developing nations demanded $1.3 trillion a year from developed nations, and the talks ended with the latter loosely agreeing to raise the amount from a wide range of sources, including private investment.

Also in Azerbaijan, countries were divided over the pledge to transition away from fossil fuels, a decision made during the last UN climate summit. The plastic pollution talks in South Korea also brought to the fore a significant divide among participating nations. The meeting concluded without reaching an agreement primarily because countries that rely on economies dependent on ongoing demand for plastics opposed a legally binding treaty. Instead, they pushed for proper usage and recycling of plastic waste.

Consensus and crises

Several talks stumbled on disagreements over the frameworks needed to monitor and enforce environmental goals. In Azerbaijan, discussions on implementing the global stocktake under the Paris Agreement saw divisions over the accountability mechanisms for emission reductions, particularly for high-emission nations.

In Saudi Arabia, industrialised nations clashed with African countries over the establishment of a legally binding drought protocol. While the former wanted a broad operational framework, the African nations demanded a concrete plan with economic commitments.

Global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic instability, and geopolitical conflicts, have created significant challenges for environmental action. They have diverted attention and resources away from pressing environmental priorities as governments grapple with urgent domestic concerns such as public health, economic recovery, and social stability.

For many countries, particularly those with limited institutional and/or financial capacity, the challenge to balance economic recovery efforts with long-term sustainability goals has weakened their negotiating positions. This has further reduced their willingness or ability to commit to ambitious environmental targets.

Developing economies, in particular, face heightened difficulties as they navigate inflation, debt burdens, and overall developmental challenges alongside climate vulnerabilities, leading to calls for greater financial and technological support from wealthier nations.

Growing divide, lack of consensus

These setbacks in global negotiations complicate the already daunting task of addressing global environmental challenges.

Delayed action: The inability and failure to agree on frameworks and commit to concrete actions by nations postpone critical measures required to fight global issues such as biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, and plastic pollution. This delay increases the likelihood of pushing global systems closer to irreversible tipping points, with severe consequences for communities and economies worldwide.

Incoherent, fragmented efforts: As multilateral processes falter, there is a growing risk of countries turning to unilateral regional action. While these initiatives are well-meaning and can make progress, they would lack the global coherence necessary to address environmental issues comprehensively and equitably and could trigger new problems because of a lack of coordination among nations.

Erosion of trust: Repeated failures in negotiations risk undermining confidence among nations, making future cooperation even more difficult.

Pressure on future summits: The failure of multiple global negotiations on the environment further forces upcoming meetings to deliver meaningful outcomes.

Rebuilding momentum

To advance global environmental goals, several key strategies must be prioritised. Climate finance is key to this. Wealthier nations must honour their commitments to provide financial and technological support to developing nations. This would create a more equitable foundation for negotiations and help bridge trust gaps between developed and developing economies.

Equally critical is the need to enhance transparency and accountability by establishing robust mechanisms to track progress and hold nations accountable for their commitments. This would play a vital role in restoring confidence in multilateral processes.

Inclusive diplomacy is also essential to address geopolitical tensions and ensure all voices, particularly those of vulnerable nations, are heard in negotiations. By promoting equitable participation, global cooperation can become more effective and resilient.

Further, there must be a strong focus on implementation – shifting the emphasis from ambitious pledges to tangible action – backed by measurable outcomes. This pragmatic approach ensures progress even in the face of broader disagreements.

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge and address connections between biodiversity loss, land degradation, plastic pollution, and climate change – a complex web of environmental crises that amplify one another. Climate change accelerates habitat destruction, ultimately leading to biodiversity loss, while degraded ecosystems such as deforested lands, desertification and land degradation or overexploited soils release carbon, exacerbating global warming.

Similarly, plastic pollution harms marine and terrestrial ecosystems and contributes to greenhouse gas emissions during its production and degradation. Addressing these issues in isolation has proven insufficient. Global environmental talks must therefore prioritise these interconnections, foster integrated strategies that protect ecosystems, restore degraded landscapes, and reduce pollution while tackling climate change.

The challenges are immense, but so are the stakes. As environmental crises intensify, the world can't afford further stalemates. It is imperative for nations to move beyond short-term interests and embrace a shared vision for a sustainable future.

(Indu K. Murthy leads the Climate, Environment, and Sustainability sector at the Center for Study of Science, Technology, and Policy (CSTEP), a research-based think tank. indukmurthy@cstep.in)

Failures at Key Environmental Summits

- These meetings aimed to align global goals, ensure equitable accountability, and mobilize adequate financing but yielded no or limited progress.

- The lack of consensus has delayed critical actions on biodiversity loss, climate finance, drought mitigation, and plastic pollution, impacting vulnerable countries the most.

Diverging National Priorities

- A significant reason for the setbacks is the growing divide in national interests between developed and developing countries.
- Developing nations demand increased financial and technological support to address their economic and climate challenges.
- Developed countries, citing domestic constraints, are reluctant to commit additional resources.

Examples of Stalemates

- At the Colombia summit, disagreement over a $700 billion annual requirement for financing biodiversity conservation led to a gridlock.
- In Azerbaijan, developing nations demanded $1.3 trillion in annual climate finance, but only vague commitments to raise funds from diverse sources were made.
- Discussions on transitioning from fossil fuels and implementing the Paris Agreement's global stocktake faltered over accountability mechanisms.
- Talks in South Korea on plastic pollution failed due to opposition from economies dependent on plastics to a legally binding treaty, favoring recycling initiatives instead.

Challenges from Global Crises

- The COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, and economic instability diverted resources and attention from environmental priorities.
- Many developing nations face the dual burden of inflation, debt, and climate vulnerabilities, weakening their negotiating positions.

Implications of Failed Negotiations

- **Delayed Action:** Critical measures to combat biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution are postponed, increasing the risk of irreversible tipping points.
- **Fragmented Efforts:** The failure of multilateral processes may lead to incoherent regional actions that lack global coordination.
- **Erosion of Trust:** Repeated failures undermine confidence among nations, complicating future negotiations.

- **Increased Pressure on Future Summits:** Upcoming meetings face heightened expectations to deliver meaningful results.

Strategies to Rebuild Momentum

- **Climate Finance:** Developed countries must fulfill financial and technological commitments to build equitable negotiations.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Robust mechanisms to monitor progress and commitments are critical for restoring trust.
- **Inclusive Diplomacy:** Geopolitical tensions must be addressed to ensure equitable participation, especially for vulnerable nations.
- **Implementation Focus:** Emphasis should shift from pledges to measurable actions and tangible outcomes.
- **Integrated Solutions:** Recognizing connections between climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, and plastic pollution is essential for comprehensive strategies.

Conclusion

- The stakes in addressing environmental crises are immense. Nations must prioritize collective action, moving beyond short-term interests to adopt a shared vision for a sustainable future.

UPSC Mains PYQ 2021

Ques : Describe the major outcomes of the 26th session of the Conference of the ParSes (COP) to the United NaSons Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). What are the commitments made by India in this conference? (250 words/15m)

Page 11 : GS 2 : International Relations

This article in The Hindu discusses three books by Sreeram Chaulia, T.V. Paul, and Dhruva Jaishankar – exploring India's grand strategy, foreign policy evolution, and its pursuit of global power in the 21st century.

India's Core Strategic Partnerships

- India's most significant strategic relationships include Japan, Australia, the U.S., Russia, France, Israel, and the UAE.
- These partnerships, though not formal alliances, are essential for advancing India's ambition to become a leading global power.
- These nations support India's strategic autonomy and share common interests in countering China's growing regional and global influence.

Key Pillars of India's Grand Strategy

- **Bilateral Over Multilateral Approaches:** India is advised to focus on strengthening bilateral relationships, as multilateral frameworks may not be sufficient to achieve its long-term strategic goals.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** One of the core aspects of India's foreign policy is maintaining its strategic autonomy. India's friends value this autonomy, as it enables India to act as a counterbalance to Chinese dominance in the region.
- **Deterrence Against Chinese Hegemony:** India's strategic partners view the country's autonomy as a critical tool in preventing Chinese hegemony, especially in the Indo-Pacific region where China's influence is expanding.

Challenges in India's Strategic Landscape

- **U.S. Approach:** The U.S. sometimes poses challenges to India's autonomy, urging partners to take sides in conflicts, which complicates India's independent stance in global issues.
- **Russia's Role:** Russia's push for closer ties between India and China poses a challenge to India's desire to maintain independent and balanced relations with both nations.
- **Neighbourhood Dynamics:** India's relationships with its neighbouring countries, particularly in South Asia, remain complex and are not seen as key to its global rise, sparking debate on the regional approach.

India's Global Power Ambitions

- India's rise as a global power is underpinned by its growing economic and military strength.
- However, achieving this status may not necessarily require dominance in South Asia.
- India's cultural, religious, and diplomatic attributes contribute significantly to its soft power, reinforcing its position as a peaceable and liberal global player.

The Influence of China

- China's rise is a central element in shaping India's foreign policy, with its growing influence in Asia and the Indo-Pacific presenting both a challenge and a driver for India's strategic direction.
- To counter China's dominance, India is focusing on strengthening its partnerships, particularly with the Quad and other regional allies.

Distinguishing Between Grand Strategy and Tactics

- A key insight in India's foreign policy is the distinction between grand strategy and tactics.
- While symbolic gestures like diaspora engagement and personalized diplomacy have a place, they are not substitutes for long-term strategic objectives.
- India's evolving foreign policy reflects a more thoughtful and deliberate approach to securing its place as a leading global power.

Conclusion

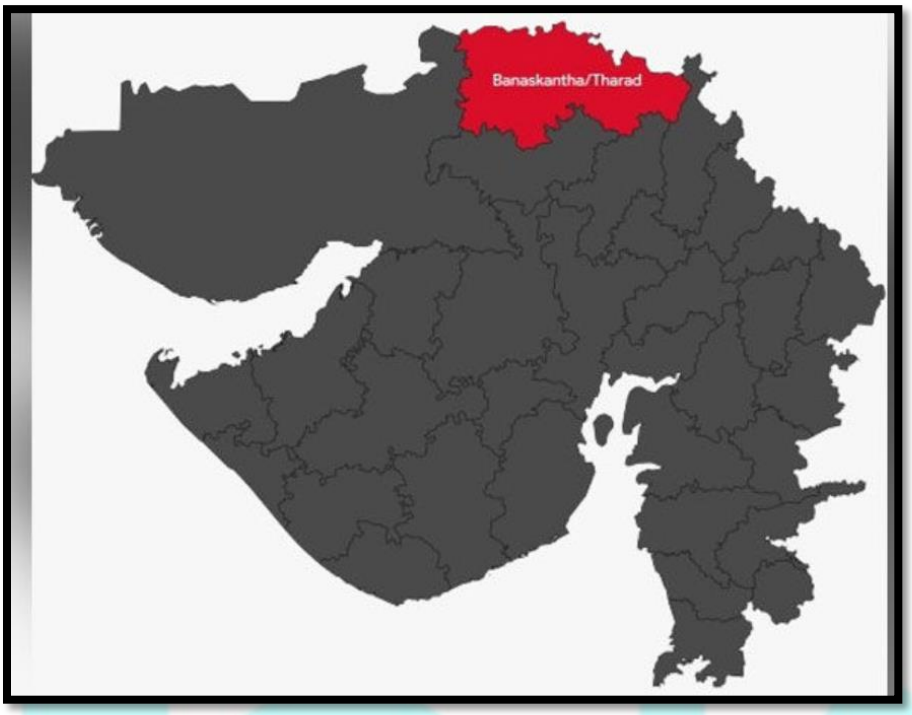
- India's foreign policy and global ambitions are shaped by its strategic relationships, its quest for autonomy, and the need to manage China's rise.
- These elements are balanced with India's soft power and its evolving role in global geopolitics.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : India's foreign policy is increasingly shaped by strategic partnerships rather than multilateral frameworks. Discuss the significance of India's strategic autonomy in its relationships with key global partners and its role in countering China's rise. (250 Words /15 marks)

In News : Gujarat Government Creates Vav-Tharad District, Restructuring Banaskantha for Better Accessibility

The Gujarat government has bifurcated Banaskantha district to form Vav-Tharad, aiming to improve accessibility, governance, and development.



Analysis of the news:

- **Creation of Vav-Tharad District**
  - The Gujarat government has decided to bifurcate Banaskantha district, creating a new district named Vav-Tharad with its headquarters at Tharad.
  - This decision was made during the state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel.
  - With this move, Gujarat will now have 34 districts.
- **Rationale Behind the Decision**
  - Banaskantha is Gujarat's largest district in terms of talukas and the second largest by area.
  - The division is aimed at improving accessibility and ensuring better public services.
  - By creating Vav-Tharad, people in remote villages will no longer have to travel an additional 35-85 km to reach administrative facilities.

Structural Details of the New Districts

- **Vav-Tharad District:**

- **Talukas**: Vav, Bhabhar, Tharad, Dhanera, Suigam, Lakhni, Diodar, and Kankrej.
- **Area:** 6,257 sq km.
- **Municipalities:** Bhabhar, Tharad, Thara, and Dhanera.

- **Banaskantha District:**
  - **Talukas:** Palanpur, Danta, Amirgadh, Dantiwada, Vadgam, and Deesa.
  - **Area:** 4,486 sq km.
  - **Municipalities:** Palanpur and Deesa.
- The division ensures both districts will have approximately 600 villages each for balanced administration.

Anticipated Benefits

- **Ease of Access:** Reduced travel time for residents, enhancing connectivity to government offices.
- **Resource Allocation:** The new district will receive increased funds and government grants, fostering infrastructure development.
- **Human Development:** Enhanced focus on health, education, and public facilities, improving living standards in the newly formed district.

This strategic move is expected to bring long-term benefits by ensuring more equitable governance and development.

In News : One Nation One Subscription

The article explores various facets of the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme, focusing on its objectives, implementation process, advantages, and its role in enhancing India's research ecosystem.

What is ONOS?

- ONOS is a national initiative designed to provide students, faculty, researchers, and scientists in India's government higher education institutions and R&D centres with access to international scholarly journals and articles.
- The scheme aims to improve research quality by offering global resources across various academic fields.

- It seeks to foster innovation and enhance India's research capabilities by ensuring equitable access to world-class research materials.

Key Objectives of the ONOS Scheme

- **Access to Global Research:** The scheme provides free access to more than 13,000 international journals, benefiting about 1.8 crore students and researchers.
- **Promoting Inclusive Research:** It ensures equal access to research resources, including for institutions in remote and tier 2-3 cities.
- **Encouraging Global Collaboration:** ONOS aims to integrate India's research community with global scholarly communities, enhancing global participation.

Implementation Process

- **Centralized Coordination by INFLIBNET:** INFLIBNET, an autonomous center under the University Grants Commission (UGC), will manage and distribute digital access to the journals. It ensures ease of access for users across the country.
- **Digital Access:** Researchers and students can access journals digitally, eliminating administrative burdens and providing on-demand access.
- **Subscription Coverage:** Over 6,300 government academic and R&D institutes are part of the program, ensuring extensive coverage across India.

Funding and Financial Strategy

- **Government Allocation:** ₹6,000 crore has been allocated for the ONOS scheme from 2025 to 2027. This will cover subscription charges for journals from 30 major international publishers.
- **Support for Open-Access Publications:** The government will allocate ₹150 crore annually for Indian authors to publish in quality open-access journals.
- **Phase-wise Funding:** ONOS will be implemented in phases, with Phase I starting in January 2025. This phase covers subscriptions for journals and payments for publishing costs.

Advantages of ONOS

- **Enhanced Research Quality**: Indian researchers will have access to cutting-edge research, improving the quality and depth of studies across various disciplines like science, technology, medicine, and social sciences.

- **Equitable Access:** The scheme ensures that even institutions in remote locations or smaller cities have access to the same global resources as those in major urban centres.
- **Global Recognition and Collaboration:** The scheme helps Indian researchers participate more actively in international research collaborations and increases global recognition of Indian research.
- **Cost Savings:** ONOS eliminates the need for institutions to purchase expensive individual subscriptions, significantly reducing costs for academic and research institutions.

Way Forward

- **Strengthening India's Research Ecosystem:** ONOS is aligned with India's vision of becoming a global leader in research by 2047, helping foster innovation and cutting-edge studies.
- **Synergy with Other Initiatives:** ONOS will complement other research initiatives like the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), driving further R&D efforts.
- **Sustainability and Growth:** Over time, ONOS will expand to include more research journals and incorporate feedback from the academic community to improve its offerings.

Conclusion

- The One Nation One Subscription scheme is a transformative step in democratizing access to global research resources, thus improving the quality of education and research in India.
- Through its comprehensive approach, it will enhance India's position as a leader in global research and innovation.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss the objectives of the One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) scheme in enhancing India's research ecosystem. How does it contribute to India's global research standing? (250 Words /15 marks)

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Daily News Analysis

Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

Tackling delimitation by reversing population control

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Recently, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, N. Chandrababu Naidu and M.K. Stalin, respectively, were quite peeved about the question of the proposed delimitation exercise and the possibility, subsequently, of the loss of parliamentary seats. This is very likely as the two States, along with the other southern States, are ahead of the rest of India in terms of fertility transition – implying a reduced share of the population when compared with the northern region. What is galling to people in general, and not necessarily just the politicians in south India, is that success in "family planning" will surely reduce the number of seats of the less populated States in Parliament.

"The state government [Andhra Pradesh] is thinking of enacting a law that would make only those with more than two children eligible to contest local body elections," Mr. Naidu had said. Earlier, Andhra Pradesh had passed a piece of legislation barring people with more than two children from contesting local polls. Mr. Naidu said, "We have repealed that law, and we are now considering reversing it.... Government may provide more benefits to families with more children."

Mr. Stalin's response was, "Today, as there is a scenario of decreasing Lok Sabha constituencies, it raises the question why should we restrict ourselves to having fewer children?" Mr. Stalin added in jest, "Why not aim for 16 children?"

The example of China

The question that arises in the light of the reactions and the responses of the Chief Ministers is: would it be possible to arrest fertility decline and, moreover, reverse it by attempting to increase it? It is evident that the attainment of low fertility in the course of fertility transition is hardly reversible by intervention, but in the natural course of events, there might be a minor reversal as suggested by experience worldwide. Despite this understanding, there are attempts being made in some countries to reverse the fertility trend through incentivisation, but to no effect. China's one-child policy was one of the desperate measures to realise population control. The consequences confronting the Chinese state on varied fronts include problems in the marriage market, a dependency burden and, above all, extreme low fertility beyond the scope for reversal.

> It is too simplistic a solution that is being put forth by some politicians in the southern States

Quick and forced regulatory measures to restrict reproduction have never paid dividends beyond restricting population counts. In fact, an emphasis on limiting population counts without caring for its composition that sustains the population may well be considered unplanned. China's case is an example wherein the state is facing numerous crises at this point over the familial transitions underway and the consequential burden of social security provisioning on the state.

An imbalanced population composition reached by intruding into the natural course of transition will pose problems that would only be remedied through promoting migration. Efforts at incentivising reproduction and adoption of a pro-natal population policy may not be an alternative as seen in countries such as Japan and South Korea. Hence, the response of the southern States to the emerging threat may well be considered premature and ineffective in the long run.

Varied population counts

The course of fertility decline in India's States does show signs of a convergence across space and characteristics but a population momentum keeps the demographic divide wider between regions. Given this circumstance, population counts between provinces may not be the appropriate criterion to have political representation that will defy the federal structure of our nation. 'One person one vote' may well be ideal but the difference in numbers of political representation in one region will be skewed beyond proportions. Unless these counts are weighed with some characteristics in terms of appropriating political representation, it will be unfair, for example, to a region that ushered in development with population control. This brings in a recognition of demographic divide apparent with education, coupled with the number of children being the criteria for shaping political outcomes.

Impact on women

Encouraging women to have more children may be easier said than done. In the current circumstances, a woman's personal loss in engaging in reproduction is much greater than imagined given the state's approach in facilitating the same. When the state celebrates the fertility decline and its dividend has benefited the larger cause, its implication in a woman's life has been less than expected. Therefore, thinking about fertility reversal needs to be preceded by measures of guaranteeing the state's social support for the additional children on the one hand and compensation for women's engagement in reproduction on the other.

Reversing fertility could well be ideal in terms of maintaining a sustainable population but the regional population imbalance can perhaps be addressed through migration in immediate terms. What needs to be answered is the ensuing disadvantage of a lower population count and political representation that can only be resolved provided the count gets an equivalence in valuation in terms of capability characteristics. Therefore, the ultimate solution lies not in reversing fertility but in revising count-based political representation in the delimitation exercise.

GS Paper 02 : Governance -Transparency & Accountability, Citizens Charters

PYQ: (UPSC CSE (M) GS-1 2021): Discuss the main objectives of Population Education and point out the measures to achieve them in India in detail. (UPSC IAS/2021)

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Delimitation based on population counts alone might not be the most equitable way to ensure fair political representation. Critically evaluate the implications of regional population imbalances in the context of southern states' fertility transition and suggest a way forward." **(250 Words /15 marks)**

Context :

- Recently, the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, N. Chandrababu Naidu and M.K. Stalin, expressed their frustration over the proposed delimitation exercise, which might lead to their states losing parliamentary seats.

How Does Population Control Influence Delimitation?

- **Population as the Basis for Representation:** Delimitation exercises are based on the population count, which determines the number of seats allocated to states in Parliament.
- **Southern States' Success in Population Control:** Southern states like Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, which have achieved lower fertility rates, face the risk of reduced parliamentary representation.
- **Demographic Divide:** States with higher population growth (mainly in northern India) may gain more seats, leading to an imbalance in political representation.

What are the implications of current demographic trends on political representation?

- **Seat Redistribution:** The impending delimitation exercise, scheduled for 2026, may lead to a significant redistribution of Lok Sabha seats.
    - Estimates suggest that states like Uttar Pradesh could gain up to 14 additional seats, while Tamil Nadu might lose several, decreasing its representation from 39 to potentially 30 seats.
- **Federal Structure Concerns:** The southern states argue that using population counts for political representation undermines the federal structure of India. They contend that it is unjust to penalize regions that have successfully managed population growth while rewarding those with higher growth rates.

What are the arguments for and against reversing population control measures during delimitation?

- Reversing population refers to attempts to increase fertility rates through incentives, aiming to counteract declining population growth trends.

Argument in favour of Reversal:

- **Political Strategy:** South political leaders advocate for incentivizing larger families as a means to maintain or increase political representation in light of the delimitation concerns.
- **Cultural Context:** There is a push to celebrate larger families as a cultural norm, with comments from leaders suggesting an exaggerated approach to family size as a humorous response to the delimitation threat.
- **Argument against Reversal:**
- **Long-term Consequences:** Experts argue that reversing fertility rates through incentives may not be effective or sustainable. Historical examples, such as China's one-child policy, illustrate the challenges and unintended consequences of aggressive population control measures.

- **Social Support Necessity:** Encouraging higher birth rates without adequate social support for families could place additional burdens on women and society at large. Effective policies should focus on providing necessary support rather than merely increasing birth rates.

What reforms are necessary for a fair delimitation process? (Way forward)

- **Equitable Representation Criteria:** Reforms should consider not only population counts but also socio-economic characteristics, ensuring that regions with successful population management are not unfairly penalized in political representation.
- **Stakeholder Consultations:** Increased dialogue among stakeholders is essential to address concerns regarding the delimitation process. This could involve re-evaluating how political representation is determined based on demographic trends and regional development successes.
- **Migration Policies:** To address regional population imbalances, promoting migration could serve as a viable solution alongside revising how political representation is allocated based on demographic characteristics rather than sheer numbers alone.
