

## **Demographic Changes and its Impact on the Economy and Education of North-East Region**

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**Abstract:** The North-Eastern region is experiencing a very high rate of population growth since 1951. This population pressure has resulted from high level of birth rates along with a falling level of death rates. The rate of growth of population in all the NE states is among the highest in the country. The rate of growth of population of the entire NE region during the decade 1971-81 was 35.9% as against 24.9% for all India. Again the decennial growth rate of population of various NE states during 1991-2001 although declined to some extent but remained as high as 26.21% for Arunachal Pradesh, 18.85% for Assam, 30.02% for Manipur as compared with 21.35% for all India. The size of population in the NE region as in percentage of all India has been increasing from 1.79% in 1901 to 2.84% in 1951 and then to 3.57%, 3.71% and 3.74% in 1971, 1991, and 2001 respectively. This high of population growth is not entirely due to biological cause. A significant portion of the increase is due to the influx of people from outside the neighbouring countries and also from other states of Indian Union. (Source: Basic Statistics NER, NEC, 2002.) The increasing number of population in this region is now considered as a liability rather than an asset. Under this situation the rate of growth of occupation and wealth in this region cannot keep pace with this high rate of population growth creating problems of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and inequality of income. Thus this rapid growth of population has a harmful effect on the rate of development achieved besides creating various socio-economic problems in this region. Family welfare programme includes conscious family limitation, where babies will be born by choice not by chance and maintenance of family welfare at an optimum level by providing sound health sanitation facilities. It aims at promoting responsible parenthood with a two children family norm and the programme in Assam was started in 1956. In the implementation of Family Planning Programmes particularly in case of sterilization, Assam's performance was better.

**Keywords:** Demographic change, Impact, Economy, Education, North-east region.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The North-Eastern region is experiencing a very high rate of population growth since 1951. This population pressure has resulted from high level of birth rates along with a falling level of death rates. The rate of growth of population in all the NE states is among the highest in the country. The rate of growth of population of the entire NE region during the decade 1971-81 was 35.9% as against 24.9% for all India. Again the decennial growth rate of population of various NE states during 1991-2001 although declined to some extent but remained as high as 26.21% for Arunachal Pradesh, 18.85% for Assam, 30.02% for Manipur as compared with 21.35% for all India.

The size of population in the NE region as in percentage of all India has been increasing from 1.79% in 1901 to 2.84% in 1951 and then to 3.57%, 3.71% and 3.74% in 1971, 1991, and 2001 respectively. This high rate of population growth is not entirely due to biological cause. A significant portion of the increase is

due to the influx of people from outside the neighbouring countries and also from other states of Indian Union[1].

The White Paper on Foreigners' Issue (WP) dated October 20, 2012 claims success in preventing infiltration from across the international borders, which is briefly stated by the Assam govt. in Para 4.6.1. The Para states- "Assam witnessed a decadal population growth rate higher than the all India average during the major part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The higher decadal population growth rate of the state has been attributed to migration from outside Assam. However, due to various measures taken by the govt. to curb Cross border migration, amongst other things, growth rate of population in 1991-2001 (18.9%) and 2001-2011(16.9%) censuses has shown a declining trend. This rate has been lower than the national growth rate which was 21.5% in 1991-2001 and 17.6% in 2001-2011."

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## OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the nature and causes of population problem in North-East India.
2. To identify the impact of population growth on North-East region.
3. To suggest policy measures to control birth rate in North-East region.
4. To analyse the nature and growth of population situation in North-East region.
5. To suggest policy interventions appropriate to check infiltration from neighbouring country

## METHODOLOGY

The study is of descriptive type based on both primary and secondary sources. The data obtained from various published and unpublished books, records, reports and journals of the government of Assam, internet surfing etc. Primary source includes data/information collected by visiting different departments of Assam, individuals and organizations.

### Problems of Population in the NE Region:

The increasing number of population in the NE region is now considered as a liability rather than an asset. Under this situation the rate of growth of population and wealth in this region cannot keep pace with this high rate of population growth creating problems of unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and inequality of income. Thus, this rapid growth of population has a harmful effect on the rate of development achieved besides creating various socio-economic problems in this region.

The provisional census figures, 2001 reveals that the annual average growth rate of population during the decade 1991-2001, in NE state were-1.73% for Assam, 2.33% in Arunachal Pradesh, 2.62% in Meghalaya, 4.97% in Nagaland and 1.46% in Tripura. In 2001, out of the total population of 3.84 crore for the entire NE region, the population of Assam was highest 2.66 crore and that of Manipur was 0.24 crore, Nagaland 0.19 crore, Tripura 0.32 crore, Meghalaya 0.23 crore and Arunachal Pradesh 0.11 crore[2].

As far as the size of population is concerned, India ranks second in the world next only to China. India's landscape is just 2.4% of the total world areas, whereas its population is nearly 17.5% of the world population. In fact, the population of India at 121.02 crore in 2011 is almost equal to the combined population of USA, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan put together which is 121.43 crore. The fact that the national income of India is presently even less than 1.2% of the total world income[3].

Population of 9 forward states Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh accounted for

48.2% of India's total population, but as the population growth rates slow down to 1.2% during 2001-11 and further to 0.8% during 2011-2026, the share of these states in total is expected to decline to 45.4% in 2026.

On the other hand, population of 8 backward states Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand which accounted for 46.4% of the total population in India in 2001 is expected to increase to 48.4% in 2026. Although there is a slow down in population growth rates from 1.7% during 2001-2011 to 1.2% during 2011-26 even in the backward states, yet the family planning programmes have to make strong impact on them to bring it to the replacement levels[4].

The extent of demographic pressure in a predominantly agricultural society of the kind of North-Eastern Region with traditional technology can indeed be an economic threat, unless there is an overhauling of the total agro-economic as well as industrial set up on the one hand and a scientific approach to the population control measures on the other. During the 30 years period between 1971 and 2001, the population of North-Eastern Region has increased almost double from 1.96 crore to 3.85 crore, the annual growth rate being 2.3% as against all India growth rate of 2.1%.

Within the region, the highest growth rate is recorded by Nagaland, rising from 4.06% to 4.97% during these three decades followed by Manipur and Meghalaya with 2.6% each and Mizoram with 2.56% in 2001. While Arunachal Pradesh records an annual growth rate of 2.33% in 2001 Census, the lowest growth rate is registered by Tripura with 1.46%, followed by Assam with 1.73% as against all India growth rate of 1.93% in 2001[5].

### Impacts of High Growth Rate of Population:

The high rate of growth of population in NE states has been abstracting in the expected growth of per capita income of the states. The per capita income in NE states could not achieve its expected growth due to slow pace of its state income and high rate of growth of population.

The high rate of growth of population in NE states has created the problem of poverty. Thus, whatever development has been achieved in the NE states, it is being swallowed up by the increased population. In NE states, the growth of assets could not keep pace with its growth of population leading to increase in the problem of poverty day by day.

The high rate of growth of population has created food problems in NE states. Increasing size of population has raised the demand for food but the area under cultivation and the production of food did not increase simultaneously. With the increase in the size of

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population along with the increase in their income, the demand for food products are increasing and, therefore, prices of food articles along with goods has increased in the NE states and it has created food problem.

The high rate of growth of population has resulted unemployment problem in NE states. The increase in the number of employment generated could not keep pace with the high rate of growth of population. This has resulted unemployment problem could not be solved accordingly. At the down of the Third Plan total number of unemployment persons in Assam was 1.17 lakh. In 1998, total number of people registered in the live register of employment exchange in Assam was 16.19 lakh. Moreover a good number of people in the rural areas also remained under-employed.

The high rate of growth of population has created various types of social problems. These social problems include the problems of education, health, housing, land, water supply etc. With the rapid growth of population in NE region, these problems are increasing bay by day.

The high rate of growth of population has retarded the capital formation in NE region. Capital is formed out of savings. But the high rate of growth of population has retarded the pace of growth in NE region. In Assam, the rate of growth of state income should be par with that of growth of population. For this, the savings should grow at the rate 24% per annum and then only the rate of capital formation in Assam would be satisfactory.

The high rate of growth of population in Assam has widened the inequality in the distribution of income and wealth. The gap between the rich and poor has been increasing day after day.

Large expansion of population has put tremendous pressure on land. This has led to fall in land man ratio in NE states. The per capita availability of land for cultivation has been constantly declining. It has led to the problem of subdivision and fragmentation of agricultural holdings. Therefore, the small size of the holding has its obvious effect on agricultural productivity. Again it has led to the problem of unemployment and widespread disguised unemployment in the agricultural sector.

Rapid growth of population has made it difficult to raise the level of per capita income and the standard of living of the masses in NE region. The standard of living largely depend on the per capita income. The per capita income in NE region is low mainly because of the high growth rate of population. High growth rate of population, therefore, is responsible for poor standard of living of the masses.

Growth of population definitely is one of the important factor responsible for environmental degradation. Rapid growth of population in India has led to destruction of forest, unplanned urbanization, growth of slums and wretched sanitary and hygienic conditions. High growth of population in NE states has certainly affected the ecological adjustment process.

Rapidly rising population in NE region has added to the problem of public health, education and housing etc. Under this situation, maintenance of public health and educational institutions for such a huge population growth becomes very costly and has gone beyond the capacity of the country.

In short, the population in NE region is increasing at an alarming rate. It has frustrated our efforts of economic development. The need of the hours, therefore, is to check and control the growth of population further. Our battle against poverty can only be won when we succeed in solving the population problem.

#### **Government Measures:**

Family Welfare Programme includes conscious family limitation, where babies will born by choice not by chance and maintenance of family welfare at an optimum level by providing sound health and sanitation facilities. It aims at promoting responsible parenthood with a two children family norm and the programme in Assam was started in 1956. In the implementation of Family Planning Programmes particularly in case of sterilization, Assam's performance was better than that of all India during 1974-77. In 2001-02, the performance of Family Welfare Programme in Assam shows that the total number of persons sterilized was 13,865. Among the districts of Assam, the performance of Kamrup District in respect of sterilization was highest (2,874 persons) followed by Sonitpur District (2,610 persons) and then Nagaon District (1,103 persons) [6].

In order to improve the maternal health and child health, the government of Assam has launched a project under RCH Programme since 1997-98 as per government of India's guidelines, eventually for contribution towards stabilization of population growth. This programme has been implemented in five districts of Assam viz. Nalbari, Dhubri, Goalpara, N. C. Hills and Karbi-Anglong. Again, to increase the number of Hospital delivery, the government has introduced 24 hours delivery scheme in block PHC and CHCs of four selected districts, viz. Morigaon, Nagaon, Kamrup and Nalbari. Moreover, the government also lays special emphasis on immunization programme and the performance in this respect is also considered as satisfactory.

#### **FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS**

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The problem of high rate of population growth of the NE region should be tackled carefully. We shall have to approach the whole problem both from the production and population sides. Thus the policy to control population should be framed in terms of development programme. While population should reduce the pace of its growth, production should also increase at a rapid rate.

In NE region, the primitive method of agriculture is still being followed which must be replaced by better method. Further, provision must be made for irrigation facilities and for applications of fertilizers and pesticides for better cropping, along with fundamental reorganization of agriculture through land reforms.

NE region is lagging behind other states of the country in regard to industrial development. As NE region is having sufficient industrial potential, so necessary industries be developed so that increased pressure of population be balanced with increased production, creating additional employment potential in the region.

To reduce the birth rate of the present population an effective measure is to check the rapid growth of population in the NE states. Postponement of the early age of marriage and limiting the size of the family are most effective points towards limiting the birth rate of population.

The raising of the age of marriage can check population growth by reducing the effective child-bearing period and particularly knocking off the most fertile period from the point of child bearing.

The most important measure to check population growth is to limit the size of families through family planning. The Health Development of the NE states must put much emphasis on setting up family planning clinic throughout the NE region to spread knowledge about the use of contraceptives and other methods of birth control.

Education and general enlightenment of the people creates desire for smaller families. Thus necessary steps should be taken for general spread of education in the NE states. Increasing employment of women and improvement of their social status can reduce the birth rate of population in the NE states.

A rise in the standard of living through increased production of wealth and urbanization of the population can work as active agents to check the rate of population growth.

A significant portion of the increase in NE regions' population is due to influx of people from

neighbouring countries. Thus, the influx in the form of infiltration must be stopped completely and proper steps should be taken to check this large scale infiltration. This includes sealing of the border, creation of no-man's land, increased patrolling, imposition of night curfew on border areas and finally to tone up the border administration.

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