

Preface

At 5 pm on 10 July 2015, the World Population Day, the population of India touched the magic figure of 12,7423,9769 constituting 17.25 % of the global population, as per the National Population Fund. With a rate of growth of 1.6 %, faster than China's rate of growth of population, India will have 1.63 billion people by 2050 and will surpass China. Population of India, as per the 2011 Census, is almost equal to the combined population of the USA, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan. Unfortunately, for India, there is hardly any commensurate response to the enormity of this impending danger across the stakeholders. Population clock in India is, in fact, a mere national showpiece, a record keeper of number; it has not been of any use to generate or tick any alarming signal for the nation. This casual feeling has infected the administration of population control and family planning right from the policy-making areas down to its implementation at various layers of field functionaries. The absence of correct focus on an alarming situation has been the sad story of population control scenario in India. This is due to the fact that both the union government and the state governments have not been administering its constitutional mandate of population control and family planning, as enshrined at serial number 20A of the concurrent list of the Constitution of India. Instead, the country has taken up family welfare programme which lacks the robust vision of sustainable population in the country.

This laissez-faire approach in a runaway population scenario in our country has been compounded further by the demographic agenda of multiplying number by a particular religious group for improving its electoral voice through population ratio in the country. The porous international border together with a soft approach towards infiltration is responsible for continuous influx in the border states of India and in the consequent incremental population size. India has turned into a safe haven for illegal migrants. Since in our country vote bank politics is the order of the day, political parties of all descriptions are afraid to speak against illegal migrants. This is an irony of the role of political leaders in the population control programme in India.

The National Population Policy 2000 has since expired. The commitment and concern for the runaway population in India are still to be reflected in any policy

of the day. The population control is still not an agenda of the work programme of the country; neither does it have any officially declared national norm of family size. It is hedged under the politically convenient concept of family welfare. Even the family welfare programme is now submerged under the National Health Mission. The big area of issue-based programme management is nowhere in sight and ironically, and the Department of Family Welfare has been wound up from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The country has been left itself to an autogenerating process of demographic transition. The extent of carrying capacity of burgeoning population never bothers us.

India is an important signatory to the Declaration of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the Sustainable Development Summit 2015. The visionary and game-changing SDGs are now to be reached by the world in general and India in particular. The sustainable population is the prime requisite for achieving sustainable development and reaching SDGs.

This book intends to make a thorough investigation of the population problem issues in India from diverse angles- demographic, policy and programme etc. and attempts to capture the state of preparedness of our country to reach sustainable population.

In undertaking this study, I have made use of related publications of the Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal and government of India. For the record, among others, I owe a great debt to the Websites of the Registrar General of Census, different ministries, government of India, Planning Commission, UN, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, IIPS and also numerous others for making liberal use of relevant materials to prepare this book. I also express my thanks and gratitude to the library stuff of the Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal, and also of the Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, government of West Bengal, for assistance. Moreover, I put on record the constant encouragement and support that I received from my daughter, Maniparna, to complete the study.

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Salt lake
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