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Number games in Nagaland

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Number games in Nagaland

Competition for scarce resources led tribals and non-tribals to inflate the headcount for two decades, but the 2011 census proved different

Ankush Agrawal and Vikas Kumar

Nagaland's population grew at decadal rates of 56 per cent during the 1980s and at 65 per cent in the 1990s. During this period, the State registered the highest growth in population in all of India. But, as per the 2011 Census, Nagaland's population decreased by 0.47 per cent between 2001 and 2011. This is the first time that a state in independent India has witnessed an absolute decline in population in the absence of war, famine, natural calamities, political disturbance, or any significant changes in its socio-economic characteristics. And research has shown that demographic factors like birth, death, and lawful migration are insufficient to explain the changes in Nagaland's population between 1991 and 2011.

What explains the decline in population after abnormally high population growth in Nagaland?

Delimitation

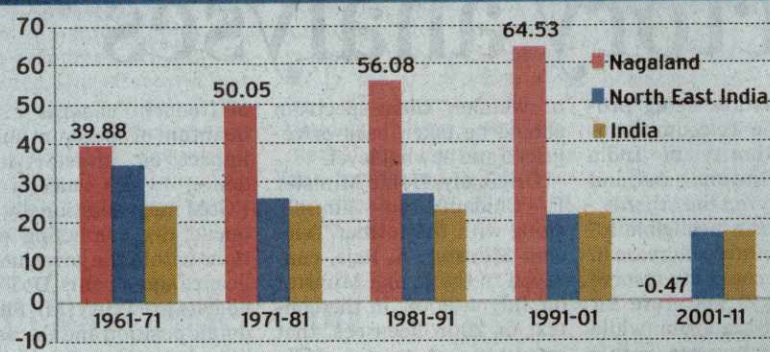
In a 2005 interview with journalist Sanjoy Hazarika, the Chief Minister of Nagaland Chief Minister, Neiphiu Rio, drew attention towards the competitive inflation of population figures in 2001 due to the threat posed by the impending delimitation of State Assembly constituencies. He argued that the hill districts dominated by Naga tribes feared a loss of five seats to Dimapur — the only plains district and the industrial and transport hub of Nagaland — which has a lot of non-tribals. The hills-plains divide overlaps with the Naga-non-Naga divide. According to Mr. Rio, the actual population of Nagaland in 2001 was six lakh less than the 2001 census figure of 20 lakh. He argued, however, that a recount would not help as there were "warnings from village and district levels that in the review, the population will increase, not decrease." So, instead of stirring up a hornet's nest, the Central and State governments adopted a cautious approach. To avoid ethnic conflict, the Centre deferred delimitation to 2031, while the State government rejected the 2001 census and concentrated on conducting the 2011 census properly. The State government canvassed the Opposition, the bureaucracy, and organisations of tribes, village elders, churches, and students to convince the people that a reliable and accurate census was indispensable "for (the) proper planning of development and also establishing political and social harmony." While the government's participative approach restored sanity to the process of census in Nagaland and is worthy of being adopted by other government survey organisations, the inflation of the headcount in the 2001 census requires scrutiny to recognise the underlying socio-economic factors that encouraged manipulation.

Nagaland's small population (19.81 lakh) is divided into over two dozen tribal and non-tribal communities. Inter-community competition for scarce public resources manifests itself in a variety of ways in Nagaland: resentment against outsiders (Bangladeshis), movements for reservation in educational institutions and government jobs, demands for division of Nagaland along tribal lines,



WINNING THE COUNT: The fear of losing Assembly seats to other communities during delimitation of constituencies triggered a contest that blurred the distinction between census and election. A 2008 picture of voters outside a booth in Dimapur 1 constituency in Nagaland. — PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

DECADAL POPULATION GROWTH RATES (IN %)



and inter-tribal feuds among insurgent groups. Until the late 1990s, hospitable conditions for the growth of the private sector did not exist and the State was the biggest actor in Nagaland's economy, which added urgency to the competition for public resources. This was manifested more than anything else in the ever increasing voter turnouts over the years, as if the election were a census.

Ethnic factor

But when elections are reduced to an ethnic head count, winning censuses becomes necessary for winning elections. The Naga Hoho, the apex tribal council, admitted as much when it noted that the census has been a much misunderstood exercise in Nagaland and that people had equated it with electoral rolls. In 2001, the struggle for public resources took a new turn in Nagaland, when competitive inflation of electoral rolls spread to the census, as if the census was an election.

The fear of losing Assembly seats to other communities in the 2002 delimitation of State Assembly constituencies triggered this novel competition, which blurred the distinction between census and election.

The conflict between Dimapur and the hill districts was the driving force behind manipulation of the 2001 census. The hill districts feared losing four Assembly seats to Dimapur if the Delimitation Commission relied on the 1991 Census.

Threatened by the possibility of loss of political representation, the hill districts inflated their numbers in the 2001 Census to the extent that the loss would have been reduced to just one seat if the 2001 Census was used for delimitation. Since the tribes were not all equally successful at false enumeration, conflict and litigation followed the census.

After 2008, when an Ordinance deferred delimitation in Nagaland (and Manipur, Assam, and Arunachal Pra-

desh) to until after the first census after 2026, there was no incentive to inflate the population count. Moreover, the government was alert to the possibility of subversion of its data collection exercises. Unsurprisingly, a sample survey in 2009 revealed that the population count fell across the hill districts, which had heavily inflated the count in 2001. This was confirmed later — the 2011 census reported a negative growth rate of five per cent in the hill districts, whereas growth remained positive in Dimapur. If delimitation is conducted as per the 2011 census, then Dimapur will gain six seats at the expense of the hill districts.

So, deferring delimitation to the distant future is not a durable solution to the problem of ethnic competition. The government made the process of enumeration transparent by including all stakeholders in the census exercise. It convinced them that, in the interests of the Naga people, it was taking care to prevent manipulation in the census. However, how long this new consensus among the people on not interfering with official statistics will hold will depend critically on balanced regional and sectoral growth in Nagaland outside the public sector of the economy. With armed conflict on the ebb, this should not be difficult. In addition to the immense potential for tourism and handicrafts industries, Nagaland, being the second most literate State in the country, has the essential human capital for growth in the service sector.

(Ankush Agrawal and Vikas Kumar are with the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, and Azim Premji University, Bangalore, respectively.)

person also makes a positive contribution to the economy. Why single out the rich for extra praise and perks?

What about the argument that we must keep taxes on the rich low lest we remove their incentive to create wealth? The answer is that we have a lot of historical evidence, going all the way back to the 1920s, on the effects of tax increases on the rich, and none of it supports the view that the kinds of tax-rate changes for the rich currently on the table — President Obama's proposal for a modest rise, Mr. Romney's call for further cuts — would have any major effect on incentives. Remember when all the usual suspects claimed that the economy would crash when Bill Clinton raised taxes in 1993?

Furthermore, if you're really concerned about the incentive effects of public policy, you should be focused not on the rich but on workers making \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year, who are often penalised for any gain in income because they end up losing means-tested benefits like Medicaid and food stamps. I'll have more to say about that in another column. By the way, in 2010, the average annual wage of manicurists — "nails ladies," in Romney-donor speak — was \$21,760.

So, are the very rich V.I.P.s? No, they aren't — at least no more so than other working Americans. And the "common person" will be hurt, not helped, if we end up with government of the 0.01 per cent, by the 0.01 per cent, for the 0.01 per cent. — **New York Times News Service**

Canadian court scraps royalty for online downloads

Canada's Supreme Court has ruled that copyright tariffs should not be levied on cable companies or other digital providers when music is downloaded, but that artists should be compensated when music is streamed online.

The high court ruled on Thursday that downloading an individual file is not considered a communication to the public within the Copyright Act, but that streaming music online is

not a private transaction and should be subject to fees currently in place.

Streaming refers to watching or listening to videos and music online while downloading refers to saving a file to your hard drive.

Canada's Supreme Court partly overturned a lower court decision that had allowed an organisation representing musicians and the recording industry to collect tariffs for both activities for its members. — **AP**

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

>>The clue pertaining to DOWN 3 of The Hindu Crossword 10513 (July 12, 2012) read: "All the same, I lanced in anyhow (9). It should have been "..., I lanced it anyhow (9)."

>>A sentence in the OP-ED page article, "Number games in Nagaland" (July 12, 2012), read: "Threatened by the possibility of loss of political representation, the hill districts inflated their numbers in the 2001 Census to the extent that the loss would have been reduced to just one seat if the 2001 Census was used for delimitation." The authors of the article clarify that the sentence should have read: "Threatened by the possibility of loss of political representation, the hill tribes inflated their numbers in the 2001 Census and the Dimapur-based tribes also inflated their numbers. While hill districts like Tuensang and Wokha were able to increase their seats, the hill districts as a whole did not gain from inflation."

It is the policy of *The Hindu* to correct significant errors as soon as possible.

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After the 1967 war, Israel took control of East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories. It later declared that the united Jerusalem city would be its permanent capital. The U.N. Security Council rejected this aggression, but the council did not change the ground conditions.

The Oslo Accords in the 1990s limited transfer of administrative authority to Palestinians. Jerusalem remains among the most contentious issues between the two sides, without considering it their capital.

Israel became an independent state in 1948 and joined the U.N. as early as 1949. Palestine is yet to be recognised. T

Western

Bettina Wassener

The gloom battering the United States and European economies is increasingly dragging down Asia, the world's global growth engine.

South Korea sought to aid its economy on Thursday with an unexpected interest rate cut, and the odds of a move in Australia rose after it showed a weaker-than-expected market.

In Japan, the central bank trimmed its outlook for growth. China, which dominates the region, was releasing on Friday that will show a further slowdown in its giant economy.

Combined, the events crystallise the sense that the Asia-Pacific region is increasingly vulnerable to economic downturn elsewhere.

"We are worried about Asia," said Subbaraman, an economist at Nomura in Hong Kong. "The slowdown so far has been moderate, but there is a realisation that Asia is teetering, that it could be a tipping point where the slowdown accelerates and companies really start to cut down on capital expenditure and hiring. We're not there yet, but we're edging closer to that point."

Reduced demand

The Asian Development Bank said that sentiment on Thursday, and lowered its 2012 forecast for economic growth in developing Asian countries to 6.6 per cent from 6.9 per cent. The group includes India and Thailand. Next year, the bank now projects 6.6 per cent growth, rather than the 7.3 per cent it had forecast in April.

"Slower growth in the U.S. and the area reduced demand for the region's exports," the bank said in a report. It also worries over the economic strength of important developing economies that have emerged recently.

Over the last five years, hyperinflation in Asia has withstood with a healthy United States financial system and then the European debt crisis.

So far, the weakness across the region is far less pronounced than after the lapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008.