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Pakistan is considered to be the fifth-largest youth bulge country in the world. Given this youth bulge, deliberate on ways forward for Sustainable Economic Development in Pakistan.

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- A) Youth Bulge as an Asset
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Introduction:-

Pakistan with its youthful population is considered to be the fifth largest country in the world. A youth bulge means a demographic scenario where a significant proportion of the population generally between 15-29 is young.

According to the latest Population Census by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 64% of population falls under the age of 30. This presents both an opportunity and a challenge. On the one hand, country can harness this dividend to accelerate economic growth.

On the other hand, failure to provide opportunities may lead to social unrest, unemployment and extremism.

Sustainable economic development entails complete progress that satisfies the present needs of society without compromising the needs of youth.

Leveraging the potential of Pakistan's youth is critical to achieve

sustainable economic development.

Significance of Youth bulge:-

The large youth population of 60 Million in Pakistan offers a massive potential human resource. Young people are energetic, innovative and adaptable which can be transformed into productive work force and entrepreneurs. This will become demographic dividend where the ratio of working age individuals to dependent increases. This boosts the GDP if the youth is employed. Moreover a skilled and engaged population strengthens global competitiveness and attracts foreign direct investment (FDI). However, if youth potential is ignored, it brings political instability.

Strategies for Sustainable Economic Development:-

The following strategies may help to achieve the sustainable economic development.

Education and Skill Development

Investment in quality education at all levels is essential. Emphasis on science and Technology, digital literacy

and the creation of innovation hubs can empower youth to contribute effectively to the economy.

Job Creation and Entrepreneurship

SME's and youth led starts up can generate employment opportunities. The government needs to promote public private partnership to create employment opportunities. Incentives for local manufacturing and digital commerce can absorb the growing workforce.

Investment in Public Health

Productivity is directly linked to their health. Investment in youth in public health infrastructure, mental health and recreational facilities will ensure a physically and mentally healthy workforce.

Technology and Digital Economy

The growing digital economy presents opportunities for Pakistan's youth. Promotion of the IT industry, digital freelancing and E-commerce will help to integrate youth into global economic opportunities.

Regional Development and Equity

Economic zones and infrastructural development in underdeveloped areas will reduce urban rural disparities. Promotion of rural entrepreneurship and skill development is necessary for eradicating disparities. This will lead to the sustainable development of all regions in a holistic way. Special

Governance and Policy Framework

Pakistan's economy requires a national youth strategy focusing on sustainable economic development. It must address the challenges of youth including unemployment, health issues, exclusion from decision making and gender inequalities. Programs must be monitored for effectiveness and incentives should be provided to encourage youth employment and entrepreneurship and skill development.

Global Lessons:-

Countries such as South Korea, and Singapore have showed that investing in education and skill development leads to industrialization and

economic Prosperity. According to the World Bank (2019), South Korea and Singapore achieved annual GDP growth of 7% during 1970-1980 due to investment in education and skill development.

Similarly India and Bangladesh have also diverted their economies from agriculture to youth based digital economy. Thus, education can convert the youth bulge into a demographic dividend.

Conclusion:-

Pakistan's youth bulge represents a strategic asset that can propel the nation toward sustainable economic development. By investing in education, public health, job creation, technology and governance reforms, Pakistan can ensure that its young population becomes an engine of economic growth. Ignoring this potential can have serious consequences. Thus, youth imperative is and imperative for Pakistan's prosperity and stability.