

**Hon'ble Vice-President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu
Released Two Research Reports of IAPPD**

**Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India
and
Elderly Population in India : Status and Support Systems**

20th August, 2020

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The Hon'ble Vice-President appreciated the efforts of IAPPD and congratulated its Chairman Prof. P.J. Kurien, former Dy. Chairman, Rajya Sabha for taking up these issues for research. He also congratulated IAPPD-Experts Prof. P.P. Talwar, Prof. Sudesh Nangia and Dr. J.S. Yadav for putting in tremendous amount of efforts to complete this study.

His full speech is appended herewith

I am delighted to release two reports of Indian Association of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (IAPPD), "Status of Sex Ratio at Birth in India", that speaks of the imbalance in the number of females and males in the population and "Elderly Population in India: Status and Support Systems", highlighting the issues of the elderly population in the country and making some useful recommendations to improve their plight.

The reports cover two very important social issues being faced by the country today. Let me congratulate IAPPD and its Chairman Prof. P.J. Kurien, former Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha for taking up these issues and involving elected representatives in their advocacy.

I also congratulate the experts Dr P.P. Talwar, Dr Sudesh Nangia and Dr J.S. Yadav for putting in a tremendous amount of effort to complete this detailed study within a short period.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Globally the number of people above the age of 60+ years is on the rise.

Countries like Japan, Russia, Germany, UK and USA have populations that are ageing fast, indicating that the world has several challenges related to the ageing population.

It is indeed a matter of great satisfaction that life expectancy in India has gone up substantially during the past few decades. This has led to an increase in the proportion of the elderly population. Our elderly population is likely to be more than 300 million in 2050 and shall constitute almost 20 % of the population.

We must ensure that our elderly remain healthy, socially engaged, financially secure and productive.

I feel extremely distressed when I come across reports of neglect, abandonment or abuse of the elderly. In some instances, the situation is even worse for elderly women. It pains me greatly to note that such incidents are occurring in spite of legislations like the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007. This is a completely unacceptable trend.

As a society, we owe the elderly a great debt of gratitude. It is the fruit of their resolve and hard work that we enjoy today. The responsibility of ensuring their well-being lies largely with the family.

It should be remembered that we are a civilization that has always accorded respect to the elderly. We have always given the most esteemed and respectful positions in the society to our elders. The way a society treats its senior citizens is a reflection of its culture and ethos.

Manu Smriti, one of our ancient texts has this statement:

"If one serves the elderly with devotion, he or she is blessed with long life, sound education, fame and strength".

We should take inspiration from these ennobling thoughts from the past and shape societal response to the elderly.

Under our traditional Joint family system, our elders enjoy a place of reverence. They are the custodians of righteousness, traditions, family honour and samskara.

However, with rapid proliferation of nuclear families coupled with urbanization, inter-generational bonding has weakened. In joint families, children enjoy the tender care, love, affection, patronage, wisdom and guidance of the older generations.

This is the reason why we must promote and preserve the age-old joint family system. India should revive its traditional family system and stand as a model for other countries. The values of share and caring have always been at the core of our culture.

Taking care of elderly is also a societal responsibility. This must become the societal norm once again.

I am glad that the government has initiated many schemes like Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana, Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens and National Programme for the Healthcare of Elderly, apart from giving concessions in income tax and railways/ airlines travel, for the welfare of the elderly.

But much more needs to be done. Thanks to improvement in life expectancy, the elderly now live for 17 - 20 years beyond the age of 60.

Many remain professionally active for years after they turn 60 and may work full time or part-time. We must therefore consider equipping our elderly population with new age skills so they may lead fuller professional lives and keep contributing to nation building.

We must remember that if young are the 'Demographic Dividend', seniors are 'Demographic Bonus' for the nation. There is an urgent need to reorient our health system to address the specific needs of the elderly by providing medical benefits and ensuring insurance coverage.

On the social front, apart from relatives, the neighbours, local NGOs and the police need to be sensitized and trained to look after the social and emotional needs of the elderly, more so of single women, the differently abled and those suffering from morbid conditions.

There is also a need to develop elderly- friendly public and community spaces. The elderly should not be made to stand in queue for long time and separate counters should be set up for them in places like banks.

I urge IAPPD to sensitize the elected representatives to advocate these issues with the concerned stakeholders for making life of senior citizens happy and productive. I am sure that this very insightful report will go a long way in highlighting the challenges being faced by our elderly and in finding suitable and sustainable solutions to these.

The second report of the IAPPD pertains to another very important social indicator, the sex ratio at birth (SRB).

For a long time, India has been grappling with a skewed sex ratio. We find that number of girl children born is much less than what is the general or natural norm. We, in our country have more than 110 male babies born for every 100 female babies. Census 2011 said that India had 940 females for every 1000 males. This skewed sex ratio is a silent emergency and has serious consequences that will adversely affect the stability of our society.

In spite of the strict enforcement of the PC-PNDT Act, we come across reports of sex selective abortions. The only way to end this menace is to create a society that is free from all forms of gender discrimination. There is a need to change the mind-set of the people and this should begin at home. Boys must be made to treat girls with respect and courtesy.

The visionary schemes of the government such as Beti Bachao, Beti Padao and Sukanya Samridhi Yojna have brought into sharp focus the need to protect and promote girl children. But a lot more needs to be done.

Moral education should be imparted in schools to children so that they grow up to be responsible and sensitive citizens who view gender discrimination as immoral.

There must be strict implementation of laws banning female foeticide and dowry, while ensuring free and compulsory education for all girl children. Women must be given an equal share in the property so that they are economically empowered. We must also ensure adequate reservation for women in the Parliament and all state legislatures and I urge all political parties to arrive at a consensus at the earliest on this important issue. Country's progress will be hampered if women are not empowered politically.

Districts with larger imbalances in sex ratios should receive greater attention from elected representatives. IAPPD should work with Ministry of Women and Child Development and *Niti Aayog* to involve elected representatives in such districts to bring balance in the sex ratio and other social indicators.

I appreciate IAPPD for the role it plays in the developmental activities of the country. Studies like these and their recommendations will go a long way addressing vital societal issues.

I am happy to note that the focus of IAPPD is on population and development. We must all recognize the connection between population and development.

Experts have projected that India's population is expected to grow to 1.52 billion by 2036 (by 25 per cent with reference to 2011). The urban population is projected to grow to 38.2 per cent by 2036 from 31.8 per cent in 2011.

As the population size increases, the development challenges become more intractable and difficult to resolve. We may need much more financial resources to ensure a reasonable quality of life. Delivery of basic services and reduction in poverty levels becomes possible if we can encourage families to adopt a small family norm. As Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi had said in his Independence Day speech last year that those who follow the policy of small family contribute to the development of the nation and that it is an "expression for their love for the nation."

Political parties and people's representatives should focus on this vital issue and educate the people.

There are innumerable development challenges in our country. Organizations like IAPPD must create greater awareness of these issues and possible strategies to address them.

What is required is committed, concerted action by all the stakeholders including the elected public representatives. Parliamentarians must provide enlightened, well informed leadership for these actions.

I would like to stress the need for greater attention from public representatives, policy planners, political parties and other important stakeholders on eradicating poverty, illiteracy and social evils like gender discrimination. These issues need to be tackled on a war footing for the country to make faster progress.

As a priority, I suggest that they should work on the programs and schemes in 110 aspirational districts identified by Government of India.

Once again, I congratulate IAPPD, its Chairman Prof. P.J. Kurien and team members for their work.

Thank You!

Jai Hind!



