

## Asia, Africa lawmakers mull inter-linkage between population issues and 2030 agenda of sustainable development

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As many as 20 law-makers from various Asian and African countries attended a conference on 'enhancing role of parliamentarians in the inter-linkage between population issues and the 2030 agenda of sustainable development', held in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The two-day conference is jointly organised by Japan-based "APDA" (Asian Population and Development Association) and the "IAPPD" (Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development).

Union Minister of Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi inaugurated the conference. In his inaugural address, Naqvi said that in order to achieve the goal of sustainable development, it is of utmost importance for all the countries to take care of their population.

The Union Minister said, "Growing population across the world is the biggest hurdle in the way of development. There is a need for large scale awareness on this population issue. Increasing population has created several problems in the entire world regarding the development, employment opportunities and health services."

He added, "Most of nations in the world are suffering from the problem of providing quality and accessible medical facilities to the poor sections. Several countries are facing high infant mortality rate due to lack of proper medical facilities at affordable prices. India has got all the potential to become medical tourism hub of the world. Our government is also working towards providing low cost medicines to the poor. We have fixed prices of 'stents' used in the treatment of heart ailments, with the aim of bringing down the stent prices by 380 percent."

Marie Rose Nguini Effa, an MP from Cameroon and also the President of the Africa Parliamentary Forum on Population Development said, "I would like to reiterate our readiness to work together with APDA and other regional and international organisations to promote investment in the Youth which is critical to Africa's development and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development."

Ena Singh, the India Representative of the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) India, spoke on the occasion. She said, "In India we have had rapid decline in fertility rate since our Independence and today we have an average fertility rate of 2.2. One-third of India has not achieved this rate. The challenge before us is to bring about the decline in the remaining states. Our goal is bring down the total fertility rate to 2.1, though in some of our states we have gone to below 2.1. India has a very large young population and also at the same time we have a large ageing population. In India one out of every five persons is an adolescent and one in every three persons is a young person. We need to skill this huge population and build up employment opportunities. Besides, we also work on improving physical health, mental health and also the spiritual health."

Member of Parliament and vice-chair of IAPPD Viplov Thakur and IAPPAD Executive Secretary also addressed the gathering. Over the two days, the conference has different sessions addressing population issues like - (1) Investing in Youth and Population Dividend; (2) Women's Health, Reproductive Health with Focus on Youth; (3) Global Impact and SDGs Matrix; (4) Role of Parliamentarians on Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance; and (5) Role of Legislation to achieve 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

The third day on Friday is dedicated to field visit to Lady Harding Nursing School, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, Parliament House, and a meeting with Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu.