

DR. HARSH VARDHAN ADDRESSES 'POPULATION VERSUS PLANET' CONFERENCE

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Demography of the World - Growth of Population

Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today participated and expressed his views in WION and Zee Media's 'Population versus Planet' Conference which is a part of its year-long campaign called 'Mission Sustainability: Population Vs Planet'.

This e-conclave marking the campaign's launch will host deliberations between numerous policy experts, demographic researchers & academicians on socially important themes like population stabilisation, empowering women & youth through education among various others as the world population witnesses an increase from 1 billion in the year 1800 to 7.8 billion today.



Expressing his satisfaction at the timely importance of holding the event, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, "More people require more resources, and as the population increases, the earth's resources deplete. The population boom has been affecting the planet and the human race in many adverse ways. People in developing countries like India, feel the impact of environmental problems more acutely."

Thereafter he spoke on the exhaustive efforts undertaken by India to encourage the adoption of family planning: India was one of the first countries in the world to formulate a National Family Planning Program way back in 1952 which was later expanded to cover maternal and child health as well as adolescent health and nutrition and has taken giant strides in spreading awareness & enhancing adoption of family planning techniques while also ensuring healthier lives for its citizens; even though India's population has increased from 36 crore in 1951 to 121.02 crore in 2011, the country has witnessed significant decline in both fertility and mortality; the crude birth rate which was recorded at 40.8 per 1000 in 1951 has declined to 20.0 in 2018; Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has declined from 6.0 in 1951 to 2.2 in 2015-16; death rate in India has declined from 7 in 2012 to 6.2 in 2018.

Speaking on India's co-ordination in this regard with other developing countries, he observed, "India has been an important and active member of Family Planning 2020 partnership, advancing collaborative efforts to address the policy, financing, delivery and socio-cultural

barriers to women accessing contraceptive information, services and supplies. The alliance, which is now entering its next phase, provided an impetus to our national agenda of protecting mothers and children through improving access to family planning choices. From the time of the partnership's initiation in 2012, India added more than 1.5 crore additional users for modern contraceptives thereby increasing the modern contraceptive use to 55%." He also reminded that the Partnership helped India add two new contraceptives, namely the Injectable Medroxy Progesterone Acetate (MPA) and Centchroman in the National contraceptive basket while the total allocation for Family Planning during this period was to the tune of 3 billion USD. India not only achieved its committed targets under the partnership, but also exceeded them.

On the achievements of the ambitious and overarching Mission Parivar Vikas launched in 2016, Dr. Harsh Vardhan stated, "Family Planning Logistics Management and Information system was developed under the Digital India initiative for ensuring last mile availability of the contraceptives. A holistic media campaign covered all aspects of Information Education & Communication as well as Behaviour Change Communication and this is how demand generation was achieved. Strengthening post pregnancy contraception with more than 10 million pregnant women benefiting through Post-Partum Intra-Uterine Contraceptive Device (PPIUCD) and improving quality remained the central tenets of the program. As a result of our persistent efforts on three key fronts of Supplies, Services and Information, India was able to provide modern contraceptive access to 14.2 Crore beneficiaries and thus averting 5.6 Crore unintended pregnancies, 18.6 lakh unsafe abortion and 30 thousand maternal deaths in 2019."

He also shared insights from the recent National Family Health Survey 5 that bolsters India's remarkable achievements in Family Planning- 20 out of 22 States surveyed so far have shown an increase in modern contraceptive use and 21 showing a decline in unmet needs for contraception while 19 of them have shown a decline in fertility. India is on the verge of achieving the replacement Total Fertility Rate with 28 out of 36 states & UTs having already achieved the replacement Total fertility rate of 2.1.

Expanding on the significance of the numbers on India's future, Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, "Population projection for India and States 2011-2036, released in July 2020, indicates that the Total Fertility Rate is expected to decline from 2.37 during 2011-2015 to 1.73 during 2031-35. India is now in a phase of demographic transition with a substantial percentage of youth population. The youth population in the age group of 15-24 years is projected to decline from 233 million in 2011 to 227 million in 2036. However, the proportion of the working age population is expected to increase from 61% in 2011 to 65% in 2036. India is adding 12 million people to the working age population each year."

The Minister described how the exemplar leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is providing a crucial leverage for this transmission to happen, helping India's youth fulfil their potential, meet all their aspirations while contributing to the nation's progress: "Ours is a government committed to delivering a prosperous New India where no one is left behind. The Aatma Nirbhar Bharat of our dreams will be built on the shoulders of empowered youth. Our various policy interventions like National Education Policy, Science Technology & Innovation Policy as well as programs like Start-up India, Fit India and many other stand testimony to our resolve to facilitate holistic growth of our youth ultimately leading to India's rise as a Vishwa Guru."

Dr. Harsh Vardhan also spoke on the government's commitment to women's health. "Over 9 lakh ASHA workers in the country are the drivers of health and represent the empowered rural women. The Government is now ensuring inclusive growth for all through our Honorable Prime Minister's ambitious Aspirational Districts Program where Health, Nutrition and Education forms important pillars. India made remarkable progress in the past by reducing teenage marriages

from 47% to 26.8% and teenage fertility from 16% to 7%. India has also expanded women's education and female workforce participation."

Noting this as a success story driven by political will and strengthened by improved governance, provision of finances, meticulous planning, implementation and effective monitoring and learnings, the Health Minister concluded, "It is evident that the impact of the interventions is now beginning to yield dividends. Today, India is knocking at the door of achieving replacement level fertility, and has made remarkable improvement in reducing maternal and child mortality. With commitment and perseverance, India can achieve the goal of population stabilization and advancing the development goals of the country."

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