

Is the Population Bomb Ticking in Pakistan?

A talk by Dr. Mehtab S. Karim

Saturday, November 17, 2018 - Karachi



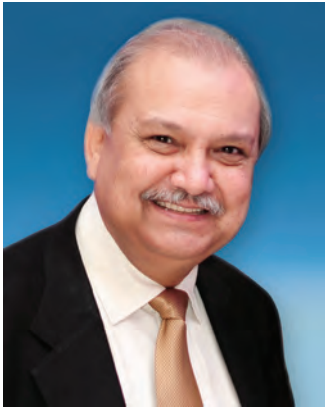
**SOCIETY FOR
GLOBAL MODERATION**

Strengthening Tolerance, Interfaith Harmony and Democracy



Founded in 2003 under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance, 1984 as a 'not for profit' organization

Chairman's Note



*Syed Jawaid Iqbal
Founding Chairman*

The need has always been felt to promote tolerance, interfaith harmony and democracy in society. I was strongly aware of this need and shared the idea to form a think tank with a few like-minded individuals. They also thought it was important to respond to the narrative of extremism and intolerance that was being spread by the West in the aftermath of 9/11.

The Society for Global Moderation (previously known as The Moderates) was set up in 2003. It promotes the basic premise that the people of Pakistan – and most other people in the world – are peace-loving and tolerant and do not subscribe to extremism and intolerance.

SGM is not against any religion, custom or creed. It promotes a society that works towards changing attitudes and enhancing values.

To further its viewpoint, SGM has been inviting prominent scholars and thinkers from around the world to speak on subjects that are in conformity with its ideals.

They include **Walter Russell Mead**, US foreign policy expert, who has served as the Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for U.S. Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations. Subject: *'India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.'* **Marguerite H. Sullivan**, US Public Affairs and Communications Specialist and Director of the Center on International Media Assistance. Subject: *'Media Freedom and Sustainable Democracy'.* **Jacqueline Novogratz**, founder and CEO of Acumen Fund. Subject: *'Philanthropy and Leadership'.* **Vishakha Desai**, President Asia Society. Subject: *'Pakistan's Perception among the U.S. Populace.'* **Dr. Zaheerul Islam**, Islamic scholar. Subject: *'Islam in a Modern State.'*

Najmuddin Shaikh, Pakistan foreign secretary. Subject: *'Foreign Policy Challenges and the New Government'* and **Senator Raza Rabbani**, former Chairman, Pakistan Senate. Subject: *'18th Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan'.*

Acutely aware of Pakistan's enormous population problem, the SGM Board of Directors decided to invite **Dr. Mehtab A. Karim**, a renowned demographer, to deliver a Talk on the subject, 'Is the Population Bomb Ticking?' Dr. Karim presented some interesting insights into why Pakistan's population is racing out of control.

This brochure contains selected portions from the Talk as well as the audience's questions, answers and comments.

Speaker's Profile

Dr. Mehtab S. Karim is an internationally recognized social scientist and demographer. He received an MA in Social Science from the University of Chicago, USA and PhD in Demography from Cornell University, New York, USA.



Dr. Mehtab S. Karim

He has held academic positions at universities in the USA, UK and Pakistan. At present, he is Vice Chancellor of the Malir University of Science & Technology (MUST).

During 2008-2016, he was a Professor of Public Policy at George Mason University in Virginia, USA and was Senior Research Fellow at Pew Research Center in Washington DC, USA. Earlier, he served as a professor at the Aga Khan University in Karachi and at Princeton and Johns Hopkins University in USA and London School of Economics, UK.

During 1991-1995, he worked with the World Bank in Washington DC and the United Nations in New York. During 2012-2015, he was a member of the Governing Council of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics and was a member of the Technical Advisory Committee of the 2017 census. At present he is a member of the government's Task Force on population. He has authored and co-authored three books, written more than six monographs and produced 60 research articles and book chapters.

‘There is a dire need for Pakistan to slow its population growth’

Sayed Jawaid Iqbal, the founding Chairman of the Society of Global Moderation (SGM), thanked Dr. Mehtab Karim for accepting the invitation to address members of the Society for Global Moderation (SGM) and other distinguished guests on the topic ‘The population bomb is ticking’.



He said the subject was very important, keeping in view the current population status in South Asia, particularly in Pakistan.

Dr. Karim, expressing his views about population growth in the region, said that South Asia, with over one-fifth of the world's population, was the poorest region in the world after the Sub-Saharan region. Due to a

high population growth rate during the second half of the 20th century, it had suffered from a high infant mortality rate, a low level of literacy and endemic poverty.

The population planning process in Pakistan is based on a faulty framework and the population explosion may become a threat to the very existence of the nation.

He said he still remembered the day when he finished his PhD in 1981 and came to Pakistan in 1983 to work at the Aga Khan University. He recalled that Pakistan's population at that time was 85 million and when he came to Pakistan again in 2017, it was 208 million. This meant that every year, the population of the country increased by around five million.

He said that the population planning process in Pakistan, is based on a faulty framework and the population explosion may become a threat to the very existence of the nation. During the 1950s, Pakistan's population growth was the fastest among South Asian countries. The rule of the thumb, he said, was that on an average, if a woman had two children, then it was said that the population of the country was not growing because she had replaced herself and her husband with two children. That is why, he said, the slogan, ‘bachey do hi achey’ was carried.

Dr. Mehtab went on to say that after the end of World War II, medical advancements improved greatly, resulting in a decrease in death rates but population growth remained in-tact. Soon, he said, a population explosion occurred all over the world, especially in the developing countries. This is to say that except Europe and North America, the population increased in Latin America, Africa, Asia and China.

Dr. Mehtab said that most social scientists and demographers from the West as well as South Asia believe that fertility is generally embedded in cultural and religious factors, which encourage families to have many children.

He said the environmentalist Paul R Ehrlich wrote a book on 'The Population Bomb' which remained a bestseller for years. The book focused on the subject of population and what could be done to control it. Many countries had acted on this, including China which revoked its Marxist policy.

India in 1960 was the first country to start a population control program followed by Pakistan in 1962 with its family planning program. Both the countries have shown concern for their high population growth but the current low rate of contraceptive use in South Asia is due to the missing element of proper family planning which has greatly suffered due to changed strategies and lack of political commitment. The population planning process in Pakistan, Dr. Mehtab said, is based on a faulty framework and the population explosion may become a threat to the very existence of the nation as there will be 342 million people in Pakistan by 2050.

Dr. Mehtab quoted the World Bank and said that the most important indicator of economic development was the infant mortality rate. In 1990, he said, 10 per cent of the children in Pakistan did not make it to their second birthday. Another interesting thing was life expectancy. He said Pakistanis have a lifespan of up to 62-67 years of age.

The same year when the first Human Development Report came from the United Nations, Pakistan was ranked at number 120 in the world and now it was at 148 i.e. at the bottom but still above Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives.

A survey company based in Europe, Demographia, which estimates the population of cities, said that Tokyo was the largest populated city in the world while Karachi was at number 8 with 22.1 million. Karachi is among the ten largest cities in the world. At present, it has the highest density of population as around 25,000 people are living per kilometre in the city as compared to Tokyo, Jakarta, Beijing and New York.

Demographers, according to Dr. Mehtab, have been trying to get the attention of policy-makers since there is a dire need for Pakistan to slow its population growth. Pakistan's population is growing by around two per cent a year. The youth bulge in Pakistan's population, is important as it comprises 64 per cent of the 200 million-plus people. Economic gains for Pakistan are still not just around the corner. The unemployed youth must be given jobs but Pakistan also needs to arrest the ticking population bomb. If it is not diffused, economic prosperity will always be an elusive dream for Pakistan.

The unemployed youth must be given jobs but Pakistan also needs to arrest the ticking population bomb.

The event



in pictures



Q&A and Comments



Dr. Tipu Sultan

Dr. Tipu Sultan: Why is the population increasing even when there are so many road accidents? Does that not affect the numbers?

Answer: According to the WHO report of this year, Pakistan has the highest maternal and child mortality rate, even higher than African countries but still the population is growing as the government has failed in its family planning program. The program has greatly suffered due to changed strategies and lack of political commitment. The process in Pakistan is based on a faulty framework and the population explosion may become a threat to the very existence of the nation as there will be 342 million people in Pakistan by 2050. Yes, there have been many accidents but if we compare it to the growth rate, the latter is much higher.



*Yasmeen
Muzaffar*

Yasmeen Muzaffar: The population in Pakistan is increasing at a very fast pace. How will it affect our economy?

Answer: The youth bulge in Pakistan's population is important as some 64 per cent of the 200 million-plus people are under 30. Economic gains for Pakistan are still not just around the corner. The unemployed youth must be given jobs but Pakistan also needs to arrest the ticking population bomb. If it is not diffused, economic prosperity will always be an elusive dream.



*Ghazi
Salahuddin*

Ghazi Salahuddin: Being one of the largest cities in the world, Karachi has a very high birth rate. How will this affect the country at large?

Answer: According to Demographia, a survey company based in Europe which estimates the population of the cities, Tokyo was the largest populated city in the world while Karachi was on number 8 with 22.1 million. It was among the ten largest cities in the world. It has the highest density of population. Around 25000 people are living per kilometre in Karachi as compared to Tokyo, Jakarta, Beijing and New York.

Nausheen Haq: Why is the population bomb still ticking in Pakistan?

Answer: Pakistan is in South Asia, which comprises over one-fifth of the world's population. It is one of the poorest regions in the world after the Sub-Saharan region but due to high population growth rate during the second half of the 20th century, it has suffered from a high infant child mortality rate, a low level of literacy



Nausheen Haq

and endemic poverty. Some 25% of married couples in Pakistan want to use contraceptives but they don't have access to them which results in increasing population. For now, only mini bombs have exploded but the real bomb is still ticking. If the population is not controlled, it could become a real disaster.



Muhammad Ali Syed

Muhammad Ali Syed: What about the people who have migrated from different countries as they are also increasing the population in Pakistan?

Answer: Out of 220 million people, if we have 1 million migrants, that's not a problem. Every year around 1 lakh Pakistanis go abroad for work too. If people are migrating to Pakistan then many are leaving as well which means it's a balanced situation. Also, 95% of the population in Pakistan is licensed under Nadra.



Kazi Asad Abid

Kazi Asad Abid: The campaign 'bachey do hi achey' made waves. Why do you think the government implemented it? And why is growth still continuing?

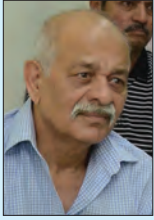
Answer: Population growth is a factor that impacts the fertility or infant mortality rate and life expectancy. During the 1950s, Pakistan's population growth was the fastest among other South Asian countries. On an average, if a woman had two children, then it is said that the population of that country was not growing anymore because she had replaced herself and her husband with two children. That's why it is said 'bachey do hi achey'. After the end of World War II, medical advancements were made resulting in the decrease of death rates but the population growth remained intact.



Zafar Masood

Zafar Masood : India as well has been facing population problem for a long time so why only Pakistan blame Pakistan?

Answer: Not only India but many countries have acted on it including China which revoked its Marxist policy. India in 1960 was the first country to start a population controlling program followed by Pakistan in 1962 with its family planning program. Both India and Pakistan have shown concern for their high population growth and launched family planning programs in the early 1960s but the current lower rate of contraceptive use in South Asia is due to the missing element of proper family planning which has suffered greatly.



*Air Vice Marshal
(r) Abid Rao*

Air Vice Marshal (r) Abid Rao: Population in Muslim countries is way more than in the West, why is it so?

Answer: Most social scientists and demographers from the West as well as South Asia believe that fertility is generally embedded in cultural and religious factors, which encourage families to have too many children. The truth is that religion has nothing to do with family planning and the people thinking that the religion is the cause of increased population, then they must see other countries as well that are not Muslim yet they have a large population.



*Shamim ur
Rehman Alvi*

Shamim ur Rehman Alvi: Are there any steps taken to control the increasing population?

Answer: Environmentalist Mr. Paul R Ehrlich once wrote a book on 'The Population Bomb' which remained a bestseller for years. The book focused on the subject of population and what can be done to control it. Today, demographers have been trying to get the attention of policymakers since there is a dire need for Pakistan to slow its population growth. Pakistan's population is growing by around two per cent a year. But a lot more needs to be done in order to put this straight.

Comment



Faisal Siddiqi

Faisal Siddiqi: One of the major causes of poverty in Pakistan is the alarming rate of increase in the population. At the time of partition, the area constituting current Pakistan had a population of 32 million which, according to the latest census, has shot up to 220 million. Pakistan's current rate of population growth is 2.1 % which is much higher than in other countries of the region. Iran, India, Bangladesh and China have a population growth of 1.1 per cent, 1.1, 1.04 and 0.59, respectively. It is estimated that if the population growth in Pakistan continues at the same rate, it could reach the 450 million mark in another thirty years. It is indeed a ticking time-bomb. We have been hearing tall claims by successive governments with regard to giving top priority to population control, but none of them have treated the issue with the seriousness it requires.

Media Coverage

DAWN

19 NOV 2008

BUSINESS
RECORDER

Talk held on 'Is the Population Bomb Ticking'?

RECORDING REPORT
KARACHI: Dr Mehtab Karim, Vice Chancellor, Mair University of Science & Technology (MUST) on Saturday gave a talk on "Is the Population Bomb Ticking?" on Saturday in Karachi.

The event was organized by Society for Global Moderation (SGM) at CMU.

Dr Karim, who received his Doctorate in Demography from Cornell University, said that South Asia, with over one fourth of the world's population, was the poorest region after the Sub-Saharan region due to high population growth rate during the second half of the 20th century, it had suffered from a high infant child mortality rate, a low level of literacy (particularly among women) and endemic poverty.

While explaining persistently high fertility in underdeveloped countries in the 1960s, Dr Karim said most social scientists and demographers from the West as well as South Asia believed that fertility was generally embedded in cultural and religious factors, which encouraged families to have too many children.

He said India and Pakistan had shown concern for their high population growth and had launched family planning programs in the early 1970s, but the current lower rate of fertility use in South Asia was due to the lack of proper family

He said Pakistan's family planning programme had greatly suffered due to changed strategies because of lack of political commitment. The population planning process in Pakistan may become a threat to the very existence of the nation as there will be 342 million people in Pakistan by 2050.

Dr Karim said demographers had been trying to get the attention of policy makers since there was a dire need to prevent a population explosion.

SOUTHASIA

Call for paying attention to ticking population bomb

By Tooba Masood

KARACHI: "There are tiny bombs exploding all over the place, nothing on the atomic level yet," said Dr Mehtab Karim, vice chancellor of the Mair University of Science and Technology, while speaking at a seminar.

Ticking Population Bomb
Dr Mehtab Karim, an expert demographer and Vice Chancellor of the Mair University of Science & Technology, warns of the dangers Pakistan is likely to face if its population growth is not arrested.

Distinguished Karim, Vice Chancellor of Mair University of Science & Technology (MUST), gave a talk on "Is the Population Bomb Ticking?" on Saturday at the 11th Annual Conference on Global Moderation (SGM) at CMU.

Dr Karim received his Doctorate in Demography from Cornell University, USA. He said that South Asia, with over one fourth of the world's population, was the poorest region after the Sub-Saharan region due to high population growth rate during the second half of the 20th century, it had suffered from a high infant child mortality rate, a low level of literacy (particularly among women) and endemic poverty.

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Dr Karim said demographers have been trying to get the attention of policy makers since there was a dire need for Pakistan to slow its population growth. He said that South Asia, with over one fourth of the world's population, was the poorest region after the Sub-Saharan region due to high population growth rate during the second half of the 20th century, it had suffered from a high infant child mortality rate, a low level of literacy (particularly among women) and endemic poverty.



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**“ A people that
elect corrupt
politicians,
imposters, thieves
and traitors are
not victims... but
accomplices ”**

– George Orwell



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