Indian Council of World Affairs
Sapru House
****

Talk on 'Future of Indian International Migration amidst Demographic Dividend' by Prof S.I Rajan Founder Chair International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD) Kerala, 27 May 2025

Ambi Srivastav: Hi, everyone. On behalf of Center for Migration, Mobility, and Diaspora Studies, the migration vertical of Indian Council of World Affairs, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to today's event, a talk on the future of Indian international migration amidst demographic dividend, delivered by Professor S. Irudaya Rajan. He's the founder chair of the International Institute for Migration and Development based in Kerala.

The program outline is as follows. We will begin with welcome remarks by Ms. Nutan Kapoor Mahawar, Additional Secretary ICWA. This will be followed by the talk by Professor Rajan, after which we will open the floor for a brief question and answer session moderated by the chair. Following the discussion, we will move to a formal signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between CMMDS, ICWA and IIMAD. The event will conclude with a group photograph.

So may I now invite Ms. Nutan Kapoor Mahawar, Additional Secretary ICWA, to kindly give her welcome remarks. Thank you.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Thank you, Ambi. It is a pleasure to have with us today Professor S. Irudaya Rajan joining us for a talk on the theme, “Future of Indian international migration amidst demographic Dividend”. Professor Rajan is currently the Chair of International Institute of Migration and Development, IIMAD, based in Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala. A celebrated Professor in the field of migration studies and a demographer with over 40 years of experience, he has trained several young scholars at the Center for Development Studies, CDS, Kerala.

We witnessed his eloquence at the recently organized panel discussion organized by ICWA’s Center on Migration on “Fraying at the Edges: Rethinking Narratives on International Migration and Mobility” in 2025, which we held on March 26 this year, where post-event, Professor Rajan was surrounded by a horde of young scholars in appreciation. And we all vividly recall that. Professor Rajan, if you permit me, I wish to be the devil's advocate today.

One part of the title of today's panel discussion talks of India's Demographic Dividend. The question that I would like to ask here is whether India is really facing a demographic dividend? Because if we were to observe the reality around us, it is telling us a different story. As you yourself remarked at our panel discussion on March 26 on migration issues, Kerala today faces an acute labor shortage and depends heavily on migrant workers from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand.

Moreover, labor shortages are not just happening in Kerala, they are becoming common in many parts of the country, for instance in Punjab. Fertility rates seem to be falling all across the country in different states, as is seen in the number of fertility clinics mushrooming across India. With family planning having been incentivized by the government for decades, there is a certain two-child norm prevalent in the country. Many families have one child or no child at all. At the same time, we are seeing more and more elderly parents being left without care.

As regards public health, we see youngsters suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure and young kids from asthma. Young men in their 30s and 40s are dying of heart attacks. As a result, we are seeing a plethora of what I call untimely deaths. So before we talk about taking advantage of the demographic dividend, we need to ask, how real is the demographic dividend?

Secondly, the other part of today's theme is the future of international migration and mobility from India. During the pandemic, experts began to claim that the age of international migration is over. And indeed, what we are witnessing today are disturbing trends regarding how migration is being governed. Take the US for instance, with the recent revocation of Harvard University's right to admit international students, or the early visa cancellations of international students who choose to protest on political issues, or the deportation of Indian

migrants from Punjab, Gujarat, and Haryana, all these three trends reflect an alarming shift.

While such policy measures may appear sporadic or driven by President Trump's peculiar leadership, they may as well end up having long-term consequences. Such measures gradually erode the global ecosystem of receptiveness and trust, sending a clear message that international students and workers are no longer welcomed.

On the other hand, even where migrants are seemingly welcome, the motivations have changed. The current politics within the European Union illustrate this paradox sharply. Faced with shrinking populations and growing labour shortages, several EU member states are actively seeking partnerships, including with India to recruit foreign workers to sustain its key sectors. Yet, this clear economic need unfolds alongside the rise of far-right parties and anti-immigrant sentiment. The message is clear. The EU does not want migrants. It is asking for workers.

And the US is not even asking for workers. This distinction between migrants and workers is important because it devalues migration on one hand and upholds mobility on the other, though as a transactional approach serving immediate economic requirements without a commitment to long-term integration rights or belonging.

Given the demographic dividend debate and increasingly regressive trends in global migration governance, it is imperative that India takes charge of its emigration narrative. Our focus must thus shift towards the model of circular mobility. This approach aligns seamlessly with the broader vision of the global workplace, a framework endorsed by Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister S.Jai Shankar. In a globalized, interconnected world, circular mobility creates a balance between domestic needs and international requirements. It also strengthens open, pluralistic societies by promoting exchange, adaptability, and mutual understanding.

So, I do believe that circular mobility offers a viable solution. Now, what do I mean by circular mobility? For instance, an Indian may go abroad for two to three years to study or gain work experience, and once the purpose has been achieved, they return home to contribute locally and be with their family. After a few years, they might pursue another short-term opportunity overseas. This cycle repeats without requiring long-term emigration or permanent settlement overseas. In contrast to traditional migration models, where families are often separated for decades and never see each other, this circular approach allows individuals to have global interface while remaining present and responsible to their parents, grandparents, and children at home.

In doing so, circular mobility transforms migration into mobility, which is a dynamic cycle of learning, contribution, and return, ultimately rooted in dignity, reciprocity, national development, and in the homeland. To enable circular mobility, however, it would be essential, for instance, to strengthen international skilling partnerships and foster cooperation with both developed and developing countries so that Indian migrants can both learn and contribute across various skill levels internationally.

I look forward to hearing Professor Rajan's insights. Today's event will conclude with the signing of an MOU, as Ambi just announced, between the CMMDS, which is the Center for Migration, Mobility, and Diaspora Studies of ICWA, and Professor Rajan's Institute, International Institute for Migration and Development. We are confident that this will be a step towards deeper collaboration in research, dialogue, and policy formulation on international migration and mobility. Thank you.

S. Irudaya Rajan: Thank you very much, Nutan, and you asked more questions. Maybe you have to answer it after my talk, because demographic dividend is not I say, because when our prime minister of India, when he took over as a prime minister a few years back, when he went to States, he said, India has three D advantages. One is democracy. We talk about that quite often. Second is demography. And third is demand. This is what's going to attract people to come

to India and invest. He was talking to the Indian diaspora. And this is one side.

Of course, I was recently talking about demography, democracy, and delimitation, which is also being talked in the country right now, because of what you said about the low fertility. So demography has different facets. So I will try to give you what I think demography dividend should look like. And also, we don't use this. This is basically a window of 20 years. It will wind up by 2045. I think that you have the Vikshit Bharat. I think that's the end of the demographic dividend. If you are not able to use it properly, many countries could not do that. Then it is not a dividend. It will be a disaster for India.

So if you don't use it, that's it. It's a very sometime. Like you are in 20 to 30 some 10 years. Then you are 30-plus. You are a different person. Or you are 40-plus. So this is a country having this demographic dividend. Now, some of you sitting here, what is this demographic dividend means? Because many of you, we're all trained demographers. So this is nothing but the growth rate of labor force is much, much higher than the growth rate of the general population. Today, India's population is growing less than 2%. But the labor force is growing faster and faster because of the high fertility India had.

Today, we talk about two children. But earlier, we had our parents and more children. Now they come to the adult age. They are looking

for jobs. They are looking for higher education. That is where this demography dividend being talked about. And in that context, the current government also started thinking how to use it is the Ministry of Skills. Ministry of Skills is, in fact, I remember one of the statements made by the prime minister at one context. India should emerge as a skill capital of the world. People can come and pick up. I want 100 plumber, please come. We have plumbers. You want the nurses? Yes. You want electrician? You want AI? India can be part of different skills.

I think the skill department is looking at it. But if you skill, you may not be able to employ everyone. That is where the international migration is coming. Of course, the internal migration is a very huge topic between the states, which I told you last time. India is like a European Union. We can move between the country. But here, I thought I will limit to the demographic dividend and the international migration, what this looks like. Because people all talk about it's over. I think it's not over. It's only beginning.

But I talked to several people, because I'm currently doing a book called the India Migration Report, which I do for the last 15 years. The topic this time is Indians in America. We have 20 papers that will come out this year. And I was talking to a lot of American Indians working on American diaspora, Indian diaspora. They asked me, sir, why are you worried too much about migration? People are coming back, undocumentation. Sir, migration will continue. But not Modi.

Trump will go. Trump's life is only how many years? Four years. Migration, no. We have a long life. We have a long life. I think, and even he was there earlier. He did some policies. He did some policies. Am I right? And now, he's second term. Unless he can do something, he can get a third term.

So I think there will be a lot of policies will come, because unfortunately, migrants get into politics. Today, votes are being bought in many countries in the name of migration. I've seen in Canada recently, they said, Canada housing crisis because of the student migration. They told me in Toronto when I was there. And then Europe, we had elections in Germany. So I think this is important, because now migrants are being used as the political thing. I think that is where we have to work out very clearly what really means, because any country, because the Indian students now is a big community, you like it or not.

And last year, from our Kerala migration survey, Kerala alone had sent a stock of 2.5 lakhs, 250,000 students from Kerala studying anywhere in the world now. This is only Kerala. I'm not talking about India. Of course, India may be close to another. And they sent 50,000 crores from Kerala went out of the country. Kerala received INR 200,000 crores as remittances, 2024. One fourth have gone back. The money came from Gulf. It's like rerouting the money. Money came mostly from the Gulf, and then it goes to UK, Canada,

Australia. Some of the universities, the salaries are paid by the student fees, 30% to 40%.

So this is important for us. We are running some universities in other countries. But I don't know how much we run in our own country. So I think this is something we should look at it. Why people are leaving, we should study on that. But I think there is a big lot of young people are coming in, and they are not able to accommodate in our country. You have a few IITs, a few IIMs, a few central universities, a few private places. And someone telling me recently, sir, the medical studies in India will cost 20 lakhs. In the Philippines, it's only 16 lakhs. In Russia, around those locations, it was around 17, 18 lakhs.

And we saw that during the Russia war. How many of Indian students were there? I was thinking only the states, usual states like Punjab, Kerala. There were 14 states had 1,000 students. And our external affairs minister said, we brought 22,000 people. So I think migration is, you like it or not, there will be barriers sometime, but it will continue. Now one important point in India is that, as I said earlier, the growth of young people. You have so much young people in the country today, because our median age is less than 30 years.

And it will continue for some more time. I said earlier, another 10, 15 years. It's the right time. It's the right time to talk about migration. Because India, whatever they can do wonders. India cannot offer

employment to the upcoming youth in our country. You have to export some people. You like it or not. If you don't do it, they will go. That is why we talk about migration governance. Very important is migration governance. You have to send people to the right place at the right time and with the right wages. We don't want ours to be exploited. Because we give them skills. India gives skills. And they are being de-skilled in many countries. De-skilling is happening. I was telling to the Ministry of Skills. I was talking with the Ministry of External Affairs. De-skilling.

Today, if you look at it globally, 20% of the Indians are working on what they learned. Remaining 80% of them are working, they may be earning money. We are not talking about money. Somebody has done a, I met a boy, he has done a B-Tech in India and MBA in India. He's working in an old age home. He said, I earn more money than my father, fine. But we are not talking about that. For that, you need only plus two to take care of an elderly person. What he does is, morning he picks up one elderly person, runs for a walk, he gets GBP 15. Then he leave the other person, take another person, another one hour, GBP 15. For that, you don't need B-Tech and MBA.

Where is our skills we are talking about? We are putting, I am investing money on my children and they are being, we have to look at it. Where is our skills? So that's why right time, right place, and right bargaining power. That India, I always feel that India, that powerful India we talk about, emerging India, the Indian passport,

India, brand name. I think we have to brand that as an international migrant. I am holding the same passport by the president of India. Anyway, Indian passport, am I right? So that Indian passport.

So anybody going outside from India, we have to make that passport. India passport. So, that is very important to study the passports of India. What is its value? What are things? Which are the countries we can allow our Indians to have visa on arrival? In fact, I was looking at some history, Indians had visa on arrival in UK. Some time back. You can't even imagine now. I think it's very important when you come from the airport, you see that 180 countries get visa on arrival in India. How many countries, Indian get visa on arrival? Which is important? We have to look at it, reciprocal, we have to bargain for the Indian passport. That is where the skills are coming in. We should talk about skilled passport. We are talking about global passport. India should come with passport. We should not talk about ECR and ECNR passport.

But we should talk about skilled and unskilled passport. You can say low skilled. So skilled, we are talking about now many countries are giving long-term visa for people who have skill. Very important now coming up. So the skill ministry and the ministry of external affairs should work together to promote. I will not say to promote, I will say facilitate. We are not like Philippines to promote migration, but we have to facilitate legal and orderly migration. This is the policy of the government of India. Facilitate legal and orderly migration. If you do

that, I don't think there is no question of undocumented migrants. You are facilitating legal. Then where is coming in undocumentation?

So there is somebody is operating the governance, agents, selling dreams in many of the young people. Go to America, you get a visa, you get a PR. Getting a visa to study in UK is not getting a PR. People are told by the agents. I talked to several students. I saw them in UK. And so when I get a visa to study in UK after paying INR 20 lakhs or INR 25 lakhs, my agent says, you got a visa, no? PR is sure now. PR is not sure. We have to tell them. That also talks about pre-departure training programs in the Asutran. They are running, but I was part of the pre-departure manual prepared by the IOM several years back.

Now it is being translated into many languages. I was telling them, time to update. We have to give them pre-departure training, not just to only the students. I would like to even counseling parents. Today you have only one child. He goes to UK, Canada. Something happens. Even he dies. Every week, one student is committing suicide in Canada. And that child will be likely to be only one child. So we have to also educate our parents where to send, what to do with your children. Because you want to say that in your society, you want to say, my son is in America. Like they're talking about our children. Everybody talks about our children today. I was always telling, that is what the demography problem is.

Today you go and go to any meeting. If I go there, nobody asks about me, how are you, sir? They ask me, what is your son doing? Why are you worried about my son? I am standing in front of you. Ask about me. Are you okay, sir? Nobody asks about me. I meet people, what is your son doing? I think you have two sons, no? What matters to you? So much child orientation in society because of the one child. I call them, it's like a mad child, one child is. That's what's happening in China now. We have to study about the what is. In fact, I was talking yesterday with the UNFPA number one, Andrea. I was telling her, what is one child means in this country?

We are very proud we achieved a TFR of two. But many states have 1.2. In fact, in a state like Kerala, where I come from, we have more grandparents than grandchildren. What it means to the society? Are we doing studies, sir? I told them, otherwise UNFPA will be out of the market. What you will do? You talk about fertility, no? And you rightly said, why some couples want to have only one child? Today, 30% of couples in this country have just one child. Some of you sitting here, maybe you are the only child for your parents, or you have only one child. Who are these people? In fact, I said, who are the idiots, in one sense?

It's one child. It was like, what is more? I want to know that. So what is the study? Do you have any studies on that? Why no children? Today, I meet people. They said, no, we don't want to have a baby. It's okay. I asked, what is your grandmother? My grandmother had

nine children. She had no work at the time. This is the work or what? It's not your work. She said, no, my grandmother had nine. Because at that time, there was no work. So they were doing only this work, work at home. Like we say, the COVID time, work at home. This is not the thing. What is motivating the young couple not to have children? You should look at it. There are barriers. There are barriers. You should study that.

Then only this, today, France people, the young couple in France, they want to have three children. First time in the world, fertility is increasing. Even today, when I talked to them, I had a meeting with the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister a few weeks back. He said, 30 years back, I told the Andhra people, don't have more children. It is not good for you. So everybody had two children. Now I'm losing six Lok Sabha seats. I did not know. Nobody told me, sir. Now what I should do? So I am telling the people to have more children. I said, no, they will not do, sir.

When you told them, four to two, they did it. Now you're telling them two to four. No, they will not do. Sir, tell me how to do this. I cannot give you magic. Okay, so you take one baby. I have no magic with me. It's not like babies have to be produced. You cannot buy from the market. Am I right? Maybe AI will produce after some time, I don't know. You go to buy and then, okay, I'm looking for a baby. Okay, come tomorrow. Okay, this size? Okay, fine. No, we don't know. But

I'm saying, you have to increased fertility. How do you do? Increased fertility.

And then I told him a very important point. And in fact, I was so surprised with the chief minister. He was thinking ahead of 10 years. I thought he's a very senior politician. He was holding the AP together. And when I was discussing with him, he thinks, sir, tell us. I want to have, right now, Andhra Pradesh women produce 1.5 children, sir. I want to increase to 1.7 by 2035. And what is the, Vikshit, what is the Bharat? Two children. 1.5, 1.7. Tell me anything, sir, you tell me I can do. Give me an advice. Because you are demography. I said, now everybody tell me I'm a migration man, but I'm also demographer. I told him there is something wrong happening in our country.

I told him very clearly, today in Andhra Pradesh. Anybody from Andhra Pradesh is here? Yeah, very bad state. Andhra, Telangana, same story. Because he was holding both sometime back. Andhra Pradesh, average women marries at 22. First baby, 23, because you're already late, no? Because your classmate got married, had a baby. Everybody had a baby, I'm not having. So run, you run and have a baby immediately. So 22 married, 23 first baby. 25 second baby.

And then what happened to the Andhra women? They are sterilized. They are sterilized in our country, but age 25, women are sterilized

not to have babies. And how many women? 70% of the Andhra women currently sterilized. So I told him, whom you are talking? Who is your audience, sir, electorate? You are telling women to have babies, 70% you already sterilized. You already did a mistake. This is your family planning policy. I told the UNFPA, this is what you promote. Our young women are being sterilized.

And some of the women who are sterilized, they got two children, one child died. They want to have another baby. There is a sterilization regret. Regret is close to 10% in Andhra Pradesh. I said, you should look into that. He immediately said, I'm going to change the policy. Nobody to be sterilized. You are doing it like it's good for many women. I used to make a joke in Kerala, two in one. You go there, have a baby, cesarean, and sterilization. Women, it is done. And in fact, one girl told me in Andhra Pradesh, saying that, sir, shop is closed now, no fertility. I said, what shop? Shop is closed, no more fertility.

So we started 22, our shop opens, 23 closed. Three years only, they are active reproduction. Then you talk about having more babies. Sorry. So we are not looking at policies. Similarly, we should look at our migration policies. What are we promoting? So you have one side, demographic dividend. One side, we are developing skills. And the other side, there is a huge demand for Indian person. In fact, everybody visiting to India to sign agreements between India, social security agreement, everybody is signing.

And in fact I went to Germany, the trains were very late. I said, train late in India is okay. Why Germany late? He said, we have no drivers, sir. Our government signed for nurses, sir. Can you go and help us to send some drivers from India to Germany to run our train on time, sir? I said, I'll go and tell them. But we are talking about nurses, engineers, drivers. All trains in Germany now running late. And now all trains in Europe will run late. Because one fellow has to wait. Then he has to go to the other train. It's like sometimes the flight, you get late here. Why? The flight came on late, or the pilot has to run from one flight to another. I think there are huge demand for workers because they are an aging society.

Like you said, Kerala. Kerala, of course, I can get people from Orissa, at least. Where they will get? They have to come. They will come to India. That is where you have to bargain, write wages. I don't want our Indian to be paid less. Sorry, no. In fact, our Indians are getting real wages. We are getting today $120 billion. I'm expecting India can reach to $300 billion. We send right people with the right skills to right country with the right bargaining. You have to set the right place. It's like a Kerala matrimony column. You might have seen matrimony column, no? There is a demand. You put brides wanted, groom wanted. It's like a matching. You have to match. We have to give them the best to them.

If you give them best, the remittances can be $300 billion. Now we are talking about $130 billion. We are telling it is number one. Of course, that is underestimates. And another one we have to talk about the governance. Of course, we need a lot of things. The bill is coming up. I was talking with Sajitha Ruh sometime back. Yes, they are discussing on the immigration bill. Of course, we are discussing for quite some time because I saw the first draft in 2018, first time. But please remember, even the first draft bill, there was nothing about return migration, which she rightly said. We have to promote return migration. What policies we have.

Look at China right now. They are talking about come back. Welcome back to India. And our Mahatma Gandhi was a return migrant. Mahatma Gandhi was a return migrant. How much we promote return migrants. People want to go abroad. I tell them, go. You want to do PhD, go. Please come back before Donald Trump sends you back. Now the flight can come from any place. Why from only to Punjab? It will come to every state. Why only from America? It can come from UK also. It can come from Australia. Any place you can come. Undocumented is a global story. It's not just an Indian story. Global story.

Even Europeans are undocumented in Goa. I told the European Commission, only you tell us that we are undocumented. You are also undocumented. If you go to Goa, to the beach, you ask many of the Europeans, they don't have visa also. But we don't ask them. I

think very important, undocumented will continue to happen. But we have to avoid that. Because we are brand India, brand should be there. And another point I want to make, which is very important for us, is that database. Everywhere where I go, or any people ask me, sir, what is the current migration rate? What is the average how many people are leaving the country? What is the stock? Indian government give you some stock.

If you open the Ministry of External Affairs website, they'll give you some stock. What they say, 35 million people, total 19 million people of Indian origin, 16 million people who are holding Indian passport living anywhere. It is cross underestimate. I might put maybe 30 million Indian passport holders are outside. Today, 5 million students are outside. 5 million students are outside. Why I say it is cross undocumentation? Who gives the data? Where it was collected? Nothing. Just one number comes in.

And I was talking to one of the ambassadors. I will not name him. I asked him, how many Indians are in Abu Dhabi? I asked him. Sir, I will give the number, depend upon the audience. If I see more Indians, I will say we are number one in UAE. If I see a lot of UAE nationals, sir, we are very less people, sir. No, this is not the number we have to discuss. Real numbers. Real number. Today, we know how many cars are exported from our country. How many chappals are exported, we know. Do you know how many people are exported to work?

Basically, it's a human export. We are sending our people. We should know their numbers. E-migrate is starting point. I think we should build that e-migrate. I was telling the MEA last week when I came here, I was talking to some of the secretaries. I told them I'm signing MOU. Sir, can you come with a proposal, how to get the real-time data? Can you come with a proposal? With you people, to the MEA, they said, sir, we will do that. We can do one state, sir, or one airport. Today, nobody is swimming and going to any country. You have to go to the airport. Am I right? Anybody is going outside the airport? No.

You should have, any country should have. You go there, you overstay. But you are going through the airports. How to organize the data, sir, please tell us? They're asking. Database, something very important. And that indicates we don't have database. You have some data and flow. ECR data is a dip of the iceberg. And many countries use the ECR data. Indians are migrating. They are not there. It's the ECR data. They don't know between ECR, ECNR. You give some data on the government website, they say this is the number. It's not correct number. What is the data we have? There is no data.

So at least the stocks, we don't know. But I'm telling to the… I was talking to Sachin Tendulkar, we should have a diaspora census. We are doing cost census. Very important is diaspora census. Cost is what it matters for us now. You want to help some cost, we have database in different ways. If you are counting one cost, this many

people, what are you going to do? Are you going to give them MLA or what? Are you going to give the colony or what? You collect data. But you should collect data on diasporas. We should aim at a diaspora census, and we should talk about the migrant census in our country.

Migration is important. How many household are migrant in the Indian census? No, because you are supposed to collect data on the Indians living in India, not Indians. People living in India, not Indians. So I think we have to think of some database on the flow. Flow, we know very little. Stock, we don't know. Return, absolutely no data, except that during COVID-19, everybody has given a report. India, how many people returned? Now, nobody bothers. It's like somebody was telling me. I was telling him. I recently met Returned Migrants Association from Kerala in Dubai. He told me, sir, you should talk about us too much, sir. Returned migration, returned migration.

Now you are not talking about us, sir. Sir, you want one more time COVID should come, sir? I said, why? When COVID came, you talk about us. Returned migration, returned migration. But now nobody talks. Returned migration, rehabilitation. Returned migration, reintegration. Returned migration, welcome returned migration. We don't have. We should have a department for study returned migration. What are the skills? Are they being de-skilled? Are they being up-skilled in UK?

Somebody went as a student, he has been up-skilled, coming back, or he's de-skilled and coming back. The skill profile returning. And Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister said we had a skill census. I said, I won't look at your data, skill census anyway. So I think very important is diaspora and migrant, we don't have a data. I think some way that our collaboration can talk about new database, very important.

For that, I just want to give an example. As per the MEA, now close to 8 billion people are in the Gulf in six countries. UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, approximately. They put 200,000. I said, why exactly thousand? There cannot be 2,001? You look at number, everything will end with the two zeros. How do you get exactly two zeros? That itself is wrong. We get here, what is the dollar exchange rate? 48.41. It will not say 48. What is the climate today? 38. That is, you are getting exactly, you look at all the numbers, everything end with zero or five. It's called digit preference, we call in demography.

If I am 35, I'll say I am 40. If you are 18, you'll say I'm only 15, sir, because you always under-report your age. What is that we are reporting? Everything will, you look at the data, zero, zero, zero, zero. Some place, two zero, zero, five zeros. Basically, 200,000, all zeros. Am I right? You look at the data. That means it's like approximation. It is not estimation. In fact, I would say it is estimation. You estimate, it's different. It's a testing. I think, in fact, Andhra Pradesh, somebody

told me, sir, out of three Indians in America, one is a Telugu. I said, how do you know? Sir, we know, sir. Why? Andhra movie runs there. Andhra movie runs in Delhi also, because Pushpa got more money, sir. No, this is not the way to get you. I said, how do you know one out of three? We think so, sir.

We think so. I cannot talk, because I talk about evidence-based migration policies. Then I asked him, suppose it is one in four? One in four, no, sir. It is one in three. Then I said, suppose two in three? There is a possibility two Telugu's to one Indian. This is not the data. We have to think on the real data. Now, 8 million people in the Gulf, as per the MEA. We did a survey in Kerala, KMS. It is a survey done with 20,000 households. We have estimated. Our estimate is underestimated, because some people go from Kerala. They never come. From there, they go to Ireland.

So we miss them. It's like Trivandrum to Delhi via Bangalore. You have to wait in the Bangalore for two hours, run around, then take a flight, very little direct flight. Nobody goes Trivandrum to London. Nurses, they go to the Gulf, spend three years, make little money, write all the exams, and then they'll go to Singapore. So it's called the via migration. We don't know. So I know people are leaving, but some never return to Kerala. They are not there. That's it. When they leave, I know people have come here. There may be another way. I said, I saw her coming in. Where she went? No, sir, there is another way she left.

So we are underestimating. I'm telling every time last 25, we are underestimating. But our underestimate is 2 million Keralites are in the Gulf. 2 million Keralites in the Gulf, as per our estimate. Tamil Nadu, we did a survey. 1 million Tamils are in the Gulf. So two states, our estimate, which is the lowest estimate, I would put it as an underestimate, 3 million people are in the Gulf. That means 3 million people are in the Gulf out of 8 million from two states. What about the remaining states in the country? Is there anybody not going to the Gulf? I asked the Etihad Airways. Sir, where are you flying, sir? Tell me all your route.

Sir, we fly to four airports in Kerala. Very good. We fly to three airports in Tamil Nadu. Very good. Where are you flying other than Trivandrum? We are flying 21 airports outside these two states. Is the pilot taking a round or what? And Etihad is coming to 18 cities outside these two states. Emirates is coming. Indian Express is not Indian Express. What is it? Air India Express is. Why they are coming to Varanasi, Jaipur, Goa, Hyderabad, Vijayawada? That means people are going. That means out of 8 million, 3 million is definitely we are wrong.

I think that is where we can fix the number. What are they? So we can do this way, like what we are doing. We have done a migrant survey in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Punjab, Gujarat, and Goa. We have done recently in Orissa and Jharkhand. But this will give you at least

some ideas to start with. Other than talking some number, you have some estimates, at least at the countries of destinations. But still, Indians in America, I don't know. You have to talk to the American census people. They may give you some idea. Because Punjabi language is the third language now spoken in Canada. Am I right? Third or fourth? Third? Third, am I right? Something like that.

So then what happened? All the Punjabis are there. Because everybody speaks English. So automatically, Punjabi is a big language. After some day, it may be Telugu. We don't know. So we should understand the diaspora population. And diaspora is your way to attract migration. It's like what is called the diaspora is the function of migration. Today, we have the highest diaspora in where? Number one. Number one where? In America. From where we are getting the undocumented migration. Is there any link between diaspora and undocumented migrants?

I met somebody in Canada. He told his friend in Punjab, you come here, we will manage you. You come here, we'll manage. How do you come here? That is your business. You can get your visa and arrive in Canada, a proper visa, then we will take care. Diaspora, we have to talk to diaspora. Diaspora is our, they are holding not Indian passport, but they are holding OCI card, saying that they are part of India. So they have to also know the India's migration policy. Facilitate legal, orderly, and safe migration.

I think the last point I want to make, so I have talked about database, migration governance, skills ministry, demographic dividend. And finally, I want to make one point is that you like it or not, migration will continue for next 30 years. That means people who are sitting here as young people, you can do research on migration. You don't need to wait for another COVID-19, definitely. Because migration, if you are working on migration, you are working on the right topic right now. This is the right topic. And in fact, we should, I was talking to somebody yesterday in the Christ University, we should start talking about MSC in migration studies in many universities in the country, MSC in migration development, MSC in diaspora studies.

I think this should be the future of research, future of courses. I met somebody who came to my office in Trivandrum. I said, where are you going? I'm going to study MA in migration studies. Where? London School of Economics. So you tell me, sir, which course I should take. Why somebody should go and study in MSC in migration studies from London School of Economics? And I look at their syllabus. They are using some of my books also as their references. She's paid INR 25 lakhs to go there. The new education policy also, we should look into that. How much we can incorporate migration into that? Migration studies, migration scholars, because 21st century belongs to migrants and migration and migration researchers.

So I am at the right place at the right time. But I started off early. Nobody told me that I should work on migration because I started my research on migration in 1995 in this country. And I can count those times. When I look for references, I can count people who are working on international migration in 1998, 30 years back. Can you imagine, 30 years back in India, how many were working on international migration? Definitely not Ambi Pandey. Am I right? 30 years back, you were working? No. And 30 years back, you were not born, also, some of the people. Maybe Ambi is not 30 now. She's not even born.

So 30 years back, I can count people, around 10 to 12 people, working on international migration. Internal, around 15 people. And today, countless people are working on migration. I cannot count. I go to any university, somebody will come, sir, I am working on migration. I'm working on diaspora. I'm working on gender. I'm working on big workers. I'm working on internal migration, written migration, left to begin. Oh, my god. Why? Because demography has only three variables. Some of you who are not demographer, the whole world is based on demography, nothing more. Birth, death, and migration. That will give you the population growth.

Population growth is nothing but birth minus death, plus or minus migration. That's it. Now, birth is very low. No research. What you will do? I told the UNFPA, you cannot study trends. Trends is over. You cannot study differentials, because everybody have only two children. IAS officer have only two children. Driver also has only two

children. A cook also have only two children. So where do you study differentials? No. You have studied postgraduate, you have two children. Somebody studies third standard, two children. So what did matter now? Everything.

So the future is fertility studies are over. Mortality, people are living longer. We are waiting. How the people are not dying? My grandfather is not dying, sir. He's 90-year-old. COVID came, sir. Every house, everybody died. My fellow house, COVID, nobody, he didn't die. Because he's bedridden for eight months. So people are living longer, no research, except the mid-age problem, like the non-communicable disease, which is coming in a big way, because we don't do anything. Only one child, pampered.

In fact, I was looking at some data in Kerala. Age of the monarchy in Kerala is coming down, which is a very, one way it is a very interesting trend. But another way you should look at it, the way the feeding habits, food security, food issues. Because every time I talk to one of the girls, she said, sir, morning I start getting up, my mother give me Horlicks. Before I sleep, also, they give me Horlicks. I take three eggs every day. And then outside, I eat a samosa. Oh, my god. And the doctors also, they don't know what to do.

So I think this is something important for us to study the impact on migration. So mortality has come to the end. Fertility has come to the end. It's like a 2.1, 1.5. Mortality is now people live up to 75 years.

Only active in demography is migration. Internal migration, international migration, border control, Maharashtra is for Maharashtrians, Delhi is for Delhiites. We also will talk about that after some time. Karnataka is for Karnataka. They were talking 10% reservation for them. Local workers, I told them the Constitution says India is for Indians. And what I told them one day, there is a board. If you go by the bus, there's a board. Welcome to Bangalore. I told them, you write that. Unwelcome to Bangalore. Because you are not welcoming us. You say, go back. What Donald Trump is doing, you are doing, man.

India, we can go. What you need is maybe order to prove you are Indian. That's it. You can go any place. Buy land. Marry anybody. Oh, my god. So but still, we are talking internally. And even within the country, all time, anything happens in our own city, oh, migrant, bhikaris. And forget about that. During COVID-19, we treated migrants as the carriers of COVID-19. COVID-19, a stigma we did. It's like put in there, oh, you are from Dubai. Oh, you are from, no, don't come. So this is what we did.

So the migration is going to be a topic which will be, everybody should work. Sociology, economics, it's a multidisciplinary. So you people do work. I think this is going to be an important topic. I think that takes us to see that if we can work and bring in some issues, some new ideas, some collaborative research, seminars, we can organize some roundtables on some topic which we are discussing. It is going to be

an important topic. And we are working on the topic, as I said earlier, right time at the right place, which is the Indian Council for World Affairs. I'll stop here. Thank you very much.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Thank you, Professor Rajan, for your very exciting lecture delivered in your typical style, which we are not only appreciative of, but we find that nobody sleeps. So everybody is always listening to each and every word of what you said. So that's very nice. And now we can open up the floor for questions. And please identify yourself. Yeah, okay. We'll take three together, and then, yeah.

Rohan Batra: Professor, it was an honor to listen to you. So, sir, my question to you is, as you talked about having a database for Indian migrants, in India, what I have seen, I am, my name is Rohan Batra. I come from Christ University, Bangalore, a master's in international studies. So I have seen, all over India, there are many people who are obviously working for migrants from neighboring countries, like maybe Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka. So should we have any database, or is it even possible to do so for our neighboring people who are working in India?

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Okay. Varshita, and then you.

Unidentified Participant: Good morning, sir. So in your talk, you didn't mention about brain drain. So where do you think this features

in this talk? And also, can you say how climate change affects migration internally? And also, you said about this via migration. So is it like, how do you see within South Asia, like, India and South Asia, the migration there?

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Yes? What's your name?

Khushi Kumari Shukla: My name is Khushi Kumari Shukla. I'm actually a master's graduate from Pondicherry University in political science. And my question is basically about, what do you think, it's related to the question that Varshita asked in terms of climate. So when you're talking about sponsoring more of, facilitating more of return migration, we are already looking at very, like, dismal trends in terms of food security and water scarcity in the coming future. So how do you think return migration will feature in these equations?

Along with that, I also want to bring in a situational context. So you've mentioned about fertility and how, like, two children are seen as max. And the government policies are also promoting it. I will, like, give an anecdotal example. I was doing an internship with an NGO in Calcutta, Calcutta Rescue. So we were working in slum areas. So there, we got some responses from women who were forcibly sterilized or were introduced to sterilization devices without their consent, and now are being asked to give money to, like, have them removed, which they cannot afford. And thus, they are effectively sterilized. So these policies, although they are not proper policies, but they are

happening through backdoors. So how do you think this features in the demographic question? Thank you.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Yes, Professor.

S. Irudaya Rajan: I don't know. There's so many, I think, answers. Maybe you have all answers for yourself, I think. Let me see if I can say a few things. One is that, you should look at the Indian census. I don't know, any one of you have done a course on Indian census? That would be another course we should organize, because many of them don't know what we are doing, the Indian census. Indian census collect data on people who are in India as of 31st March, 2027. That's what they're talking about, the new census now. So that time, we can get data on all other nationality. We can get it here in our country.

So we get their data. In 2011 census, we have data, because I have looked at immigration to India. In fact, my estimate is close to 10 million. Government says 5 million, because we have nothing right now. You go to Bangalore, a lot of foreigners are there. We go, they're also coming in. Students are coming in to many places anyway. So I think you get some idea on the people who are coming in through the census. But census will not capture people who are going in, because you cannot do that as per the census definition, but there are manipulations. Sometimes the women report, the husband is away. He has went outside to buy a milk. They will report, because they

think it's about ration card or something like that. Otherwise, you don't get any data. That is the problem of this migration thing.

In fact, migration that we talk about India as a big brother, I think it is important. I told many times, in many contexts, I have written about that. I spoke in the SOC group, South Asia Regional Development. Of course, it's not functioning very well. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, together accounts in many countries to 30% to 40% of the populations. We are not united on migration, because we treat each one of us as competitors. That is where the big problem, because I remember in 2025, I was sitting with the Bahrain ambassador. He was asked to, the Bahrain government said, call him back. They told the Indian government. He said, why should I go? That night, I was with him in Bahrain.

The point was, he fixed the salary for the housemates as $300. So the Bahrain government said, who are you to fix a salary for a maid working in our country? And $300 was fixed. And the same day, one of the South Asian country, what I named out of the five, they went to the Bahrain government. Sir, why are you worried about them? We can give our housemaid for $100. Why do you worry about Indian housemaid? We will send our maids. I think this is where we are not able to bargain. So I was comparing with the SOC, with the oil-producing export countries, OPEC. You look at the OPEC's history, OPEC fixed the price for the oil. Today, everything OPEC fixed. They may fight, but they'll fix the price. You people are very young.

When I was young, another thing, the petrol was not this much cost. This petrol price is fixed by the OPEC. That model we should follow, because the labor-exporting countries, like South Asia, including Philippines, Indonesia, we should sit together. And you want a plumber? Any one of the countries will give the plumber badges with the same in UAE. So which we are not united, they are exploiting us.

So I think the sending countries, which is what the Abu Dhabi dialogue, or the Colombo process. But it's not really doing anything. I know that. I went to attend some meetings there. I think this is where we are failing. Because we are fighting. For them, this is easy. They will manipulate the wages. That's why there is no minimum wages in the Gulf. And I was arguing to them, okay, you don't have minimum wages, but why can't you talk about living wages? This is another concept to be promoted. I was talking with several times. Living wages, somebody want to live in Dubai, like you have somebody want to live in Delhi, you need this much money. If you want to live in a decent life.

So like that, you can talk about living wages. Because it's exploitation there. It's like a new form of slavery, in one sense. So I think this is where we have to join together. We have to fight South Asia. We can talk too much. But migration, unfortunately, we are competitors. I think that is where we are stuck with that.

Now, brain drain, I don't talk now. Because it's all old story. It's all what is called the Rajiv Gandhi's time, and other thing. Now we are on Modi's time. We should not talk about brain drain. We should talk about how to make brain gain. I think we can do brain gain. Because I saw returned migrants coming back and starting startups. That's why I told one of the meeting. Of course, I can tell right now, we need more Donald Trumps in the world. They should send back our Indians. Because the persons who came in the first flight, they all paid INR 40 lakh to INR 1 crores to go there. They are not poor migrants. What I call them the aspirational, growing middle class in our country.

So we need Donald Trump type people in many countries to send back our Indians who are skilled. These people will be doing unskilled work. I met a boy who did PhD from IIT. He was cutting fish market in Canada. PhD from IIT in India. I don't want to say which IIT, because somebody will ask me then. Because IIT is a big claim here. So because he said, sir, I got a job. My wife is here. We are having a house here, sir. You can come and have your coffee. And he has two children. Everything he has. He has money. That degree does not matter. That's where the skills are there. I think we should look at.

So brain gain we should talk. In fact, I will talk about even brain circulation. But right now, happening is brain waste. I wrote an article on brain waste. Indian brain are being wasted in many countries because of the de-skilling. We should talk about convert

the brain waste into brain gain. Bring them back. They are not getting the right job. You should promote it. There will be unemployment. There will be things. But these all, we have to fight it out. Kerala, everybody leaves from Kerala. I was not from Kerala. I was from Tamil Nadu. I went to Kerala. I had a job. I have no regret I went to Kerala, because I thought Kerala people are leaving anyway. Somebody to study about them. That's why I used to make a joke. You might have heard about Kerala is known for cashew nuts. You know cashew nuts? So nuts are exported. No, cashews are exported. Nuts are in Kerala. So they need some cashews. So we have to go there.

So we have to bring the cashews back. Cashews back. I think this is very important. We have the imaginative way of thinking. Because it's not like the earlier 2 plus 1 equal to 3. That won't work now. Because the young generation, I don't know, they call new generations. They want to be quick money, quick things. Everything quick. But they are not having quick babies, unfortunately. But everything they want quick. But no, but quick thing. See, I think they want to have the starting scale, like big scale. Oh, what is that? Like that.

So I think we should look at them. And you should attract them. You should attract them. I think some of them will come. Because why I am telling you why some of them will come is that some of you who are maybe, some of you heard about 2008 global economic crisis. Global economic crisis? I went to an IIT. That was a new IIT opened.

I went to one of the department. All assistant professors were returned from outside the country, took a job in IIT. I asked them, you didn't get the job in the US. You came back, no? Yes, sir.

The crisis brought a lot of people. And some of them are working still in the same IIT. They moved to another IIT or IIM. People are ready to come. After PhD, if you are offering, not like a big thing, but you are offering. And we have a lot of opening coming up in private university now. There are jobs available in some places. People are asking. Sometimes we are not able to give a job. So I think how to encourage the return migration is very important. Otherwise, this will be a brain waste. Because I have seen Indian people who have done PhD in outside the country. I never saw them as assistant professors. They say, I'm in this project. I'm in that project. I'm in this. I said, I get money from three projects, four projects. But their designation is this one, that one. And you can't see even your full professors.

I was looking for a full professor heading the department in Europe. I finally saw one of my friend, Ajay Bailey, who is the Head of the Department of Anthropology in Utrecht University. And he said, because he speaks, he has to speak a Netherland language. I have not seen many people who went as a student, did PhD. Now he's a PR. He's the Head of the Department of Anthropology. Can you look at it, how many of our Indians are heading somebody's head of the department? Very few people. They will be doing some job. They will be earning $3,000, $4,000. That is okay. I'm talking about real brain

gain. I don't want brain waste. Because brain waste, I really feel very sad. Because after putting my children, I invest on my children. And then they go and do de-skilling. I feel like crying.

So I think that is something important and climate change, I think it's a global phenomenon, climate change. We have just finished a study in Orissa on Kendrapara and Kancham. Recently, a study done for the Food and Agriculture Organization in Delhi. I went to Kendrapara. They said that it's called Tsunami-Ready Village. I don't know, anybody from Orissa here? Yeah, Tsunami-Ready Village. Then I also asked somebody in Kerala. We had Kerala floods come. We had a landslide. I think climate change is going to be a very important topic on migration thing. People are leaving.

Now there is an additional factor is coming in. People are leaving. It's not like everybody's not leaving. And also, we said how to strengthen the villages. Because I was telling, we have 100 smart cities. Smart city means migration. Unfortunately, the economists, maybe wrongly they are thinking urbanization will lead to economic growth. You should bring everybody to city, India will grow. That's why they are promoting the smart cities. Why can't you talk about smart villages? We will create 10,000 smart villages. People will go back.

I was telling to Amravati, people will come. 40% of our city population today in country, every city is migrants. Of course, they are not smart city. We saw Delhi and Mumbai as a dying city during COVID-19.

And Chennai is always floating. Somebody said, I came from Orissa, sir. There was a flood when I came to Chennai, sir. Again floods, sir. Where I will go, sir? Even they go to the place, there's a flood, sir.

So I think climate change is going to be a very, and especially cities, will be a very, I think even Delhi, suddenly rains, and we will become very, you know? So I think it's very important that we are not planning this climate change as a big thing, but climate change will have a lot of implications, not just international, even from Bangladesh, water things like this, all these, Sri Lanka. Somebody says in 2100, there will be no Sri Lanka. There will be no Sri Lanka, where are the people there? All of them will be here in India. You like it or not, they may not be called even refugees. You call them climate refugees, maybe? Some other refugees.

We are also talking about that. People are running because of the water is coming. We also run sometimes when the water is coming, so they are also running. So I think this is going to be a very global phenomenon. We should look at it. I think also think about today, like I told you about the Andhra women, 21 married, 26, I was looking at the migrant profile in India. Do you know what is the average migrant look like in our country? Any one of you can give an idea. How the average migrant looks like. Average migrant in India, what is the profile?

Unidentified Participant: 22, 23 years.

S. Irudaya Rajan: 22, 23 years, okay. Any other characteristics of the migrant in India?

Unidentified Participant: Single.

S. Irudaya Rajan: Single, young. Any other characteristics? We are all thinking too much. Heavy death. Heavy death back home. Any other quick characteristics?

Unidentified Participant: That come from a rural background.

S. Irudaya Rajan: Come from a rural background? Yeah, yeah. Rural is, yeah, okay. Student. We are not able to have one profile. KMS, we did. We did. Age at leaving Kerala. Age at returned. We are not fixing the return. Age at returned. We have to talk about what age they returned. Then only we should talk about return migration policies. So the Kerala will be a male, young, low-skilled, a Muslim, and in Gulf. Gulf, Muslim, young, low-skilled, in Gulf. So you have some male, not married. We are talking about male, young male.

And that profile, if you look at what is the UP people, now UP migration is happening, internal migration. Of course, UP will be the future international migration. There is a link between internal and international migration. So we talk about international migration here. There's a link between internal and international. Kerala was

known as an internal migration state in 1960s and 70s. That's why Kerala was called the money order economy. Now there is no longer money order. We call them remittance economy. So there is a link.

So I think this is something you should look at it. We'll close it.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Okay. Any other questions?

S. Irudaya Rajan: Yeah, one more round. Yeah, please. I said earlier very clearly that India cannot give employment to everyone. I have no doubt about that. And so people will leave. But the point is that migration means it is money. If you look at economic theories, it's a wage differential. Here, I don't think anybody goes as unemployed. I was looking at unemployed Indians in Gulf. There are no unemployed Indians. Kerala will be the highest unemployment. But I ask them, anybody unemployed in the Indians went to Dubai? No. You have to have some employment. You go and visit visa, then get an employment. Because here, we talk, so that is a problem. Here we are thinking, anyway, I don't get anything here. So I can get something there. I'm going. And for them, they want the work done.

So I think that is, we have to crack that. Because I think we have to crack that. How do you crack that? Because Kerala plumber is leaving Kerala, thinking he can make more money than Kerala. Because he's earning INR 1,200 per day. He thinks he can earn 2,000 rupees per day in Dubai. So he's leaving for another INR 800

difference. From Orissa, the fellow says, I earn only INR 300 in Orissa, and I don't get every day. So now here, if I come to Kerala, I get INR 1,200 plus extra time I work. So I'm earning around INR 1,800 to INR 2,000 per day. So I'm earning INR 45,000, which is equal to the JRF.

Everywhere. Everywhere. So that wages. The wage is the one attracting, am I right? So once you have nothing, am I right? We are unemployed. Like women who are unemployed from Telangana, we did a study. They are unemployed. They go as a housemaid to the Gulf. They are ready to work for even $500. Because anyway, they are here, what? INR 40,000 is a big money for the widow sometime, or the separated women with one baby. For them, this is a hope for them. Am I right? This is a hope, because they are exploited there. So it's okay, sir, because anyway, sir, we are nothing here.

So I think that is another thing we should really look at it, how economically we can maintain that. I think the point is very important. But how do you look at that is very important. I don't want our Indians to suffer there. And this is something, because I believe that they also hold Indian passport. So I want them to be... that's very important that our Indians are being de-skilled. Indians are being working at very lower wages, even in the Gulf. Those type of thing, I wanted some upgrading of our Indians. And for that, there is a government policy interventions. Because now the nurses who are going to Germany right now with India signed an agreement called

the Triple Wind Program, which we are looking at it. There is a wage fixed. If you learn this language, you do a nursing. Now what happened? There are many people in India, they are after 12th, they are studying a one-year language course. Then they are doing nursing in Germany. They are getting stipend, then they will be employed.

So it is better, rather than, because that they require their nursing. You study that, it's like a mismatch of skills. So we have to think of some innovative ideas to see that, because I want that the migrants should be protected at any cost. I am on that, should be protected at any cost. But they should not be just allow them to.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: Okay, thank you, Professor Rajan. From your talk and from the question and answer session. For me, there are two takeaways. First, one point that you made was that there is a 20-year window for this demographic dividend till 2047. And after 2047, this demographic trend is slated to be kind of projected to decline. So one takeaway that obviously comes from this is that we don't need a declining population. And we want a vibrant India with teeming millions, with teeming people, teeming with its people, and with millions and millions of smiling faces.

So if that indeed is the case, then what I would feel is that what we really need to do is to review and reassess our family planning programs. And government advocacy really makes a difference. All

the ads that come on the government-sponsored ads, Hum Do, Humare Do, they all make so much of difference. And it has been continuing since decades. So we have to stop incentivizing only two children. We have to break free from that you should have only two kids and so on. It should be a decision which should be in the realm of an individual's choice. If I have the means, I should do one. If I have the means, why shouldn't I have four children if I want four children in my family and I want to enjoy?

Look at the Israelis, for instance. They have a conscious policy of increasing their population, that they'll never stop anybody from having more than five children. You can have six children. Look at Americans. They can have as many number of children. So, why should it be a kind of government advocacy of having only two child, a two-child norm? And even China now has kind of relaxed. Yeah, you can have one more baby. And their entire social system has been, I means, I don't want to use those words, but it has really gone through a negative phase with the kind of policies they have pursued. So that is my takeaway number one.

The second thing that you said, that migration is likely to continue for the next 30 years. So these are the two important projections you've made. Demographic dividend, 20 years, and migration is likely to continue for 30 years. Now, all I want to say, because I'm a practitioner, I am a diplomat. I'm posted here. From the geopolitics that I see today, from where I am sitting, for a projection like this to

work, that migration will continue for 30 years, you really need conducive political environments. So that is the basic assumption.

So we have to assume that things will go on. And we know that geopolitical shifts are taking place. We know that a new world order is going to come up. And there will be a lot of transitions. There will be a lot of changes. Some will be difficult. Some will be easy. Not easy. There will be difficult changes, obviously. So if the US is going to start looking inward, there will be difficult changes. You will have to make choices, for instance. If Indian diaspora outside, who are citizens of US or Canada, it is US and Canada who have to look after them. I don't have to look after them. They are not my responsibility. They are not my citizens. These are people who have made the decision to transition, to go to another country. They've taken up citizenship. They've not valued Indian citizenship. They have made that transition. They have made that decision.

All I can do for them is what you also said, the return policy. I can have at the government level a return policy that those, I mean, this is India. We will never say no. We will always have open arms. So if any Indian who became an American has second thoughts that I want to go back to India and live in Kashi or maybe with his ancestral village or something, they're more than welcome. Have a policy of return and reintegration. Why should we say no? India will never say no to its people. But once you have made the transition, you are not my responsibility. So that is the other.

And what I feel, in this 30-year projection that you are saying, you have to distinguish between migration and mobility. Nowadays, we're talking of both the terms, migration and mobility. Migration has a sense of permanence. People will go out. They will settle there. They will live there. They will acquire permanent residency. Then they will acquire citizenship, et cetera, et cetera. But mobility is about people going and working there for three years, for four years, and five years, and then coming back.

So I can do a stint. Ambi is going to study there for two years. She will come back. I don't know. She may come back. So Anvesha went to Germany for, she lived there one and a half years. She's back. So the other thing is mobility. Mobility is very important, because we are living in an interconnected world. We are living in a so-called world which is fast becoming a world civilization. So we're living in an interconnected world. And we have to be open-minded, open to other cultures, open to other societies. And I, as a policymaker, would like Indians to travel abroad, to know the world, to come back. This cultural interface is very, very important.

So I see mobility rising more than migration. Migration, because the current geopolitical environment is not very positive. And it is my duty to tell my people that the geopolitical environment is not positive. So please be cautious about making a decision to move out, or to send your children out. So you have to be cautious. If Trump is

going to… my own son is in the US, right? So we're always thinking, okay, if there is a problem, he can always come back to India, right? Yeah. So that assurance of your homeland is available to those who have not given up the citizenship. But it is not available to those who have given up the citizenship. It will not be available.

And as a government, what we need to do is we need to ask our interlocutors in other governments to take care of the Indian diaspora who have acquired their citizenship. So we have to ask Canada that all the Sikh population, or the Hindu population, or the Andhra population who is living there, who's acquired Canadian citizenship, you please assimilate them fully and completely. Why did you give them citizenship if you were not to assimilate them fully? So if they're going to keep having one foot in India, one foot there, they're serving nobody's purpose. They're harming themselves.

So, migration is like something which has been intrinsic to human existence since millennia. But a new world order is coming. So we have to see what will happen to migration.

Prof. Rajan: But what is that about? When someone is going to study, you say, please come back. But I wanted to come back not by studying by the Donald Trump. On her own, yes. After the global crisis, there is no job. I came back after a year. I wanted, that is the thing we are looking for. Not like, there's nothing that I have come

back after this. Or, no, sir, now I can't get my PR, I'm coming back. So I wanted the normal, the brand name.

Ambi Srivastav: Sorry to interject, but Ambi would come back if she gets like a INR 1,00,000 job per month. So that's a very viable thing to return back to also. It's a lot of jobs to do on that. I mean, maybe more. That was just a benchmark.

Nutan Kapoor Mahawar: So well, to that I'll only say, money is not everything. With that, let's finish, because family connections, family hold is very, very important. We give up many things for family, for the sake of being together. That's very important. So money is not everything. So there we finish. Now let's conclude the MOU. That's what is left to do. Thank you.

Ambi Srivastav: So I take this opportunity to thank Professor Rajan for a deeply insightful, rather unsettling, but a thought-provoking talk. And I'm also very delighted to announce the mark of this new journey with the signing of MOU between CMMTS and IIMAD. So a special thank you to all the attendees today who took out their valuable time, midday, to attend today's conversation. Thank you for asking thought-provoking questions. My senior gratitude to my colleagues at the Council for the guidance, to the admin team for all the support for today's event. And with that, I warmly invite you all for tea in the foyer. And thank you once again. Have a great day ahead.

List of Participants in the Discussion

1. Ambassador Nutan Kapoor Mahawar, Additional Secretary, ICWA
2. Prof S.I. Rajan, Founder Chair, International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Kerala
3. Ambi Srivastav, Consultant and Research Lead (CMMDS), ICWA