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World Population And Bangladesh

THE U.N. Demographic Year Book 1978 projects that World Population which is growing by 76 million persons every year will reach as high as 8080 million by 2013. This portends an alarming situation. Even with the present world population of 4043 million which is about half of the projected size, it is not possible to provide basic needs like food and shelter to all. The situation is worse particularly in the less developed countries which generally belong to Asia and Africa. In most of these countries living condition of the people is deplorable and they do not have enough to meet their food and nutrition needs. A recent World Bank study reveals that the poorest countries especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia will have difficulty in meeting food and nutrition needs because they lack financial resources to import the large quantities of food required to fill up the gap between production and consumption. It has been estimated that between 400 and 450 million people cannot afford to buy their additional food needs.

This grave situation calls for two-pronged attack—one directed to increased food production particularly in the countries where food deficit is quite pronounced and secondly the population activities in these countries are to be geared up to check further increase of population so that increase in food production cannot be offset by population increase.

Population activities in the world have of late been intensified and for the first time signs of decrease in the rate of growth are manifest. More than according to the Population Reference Bureau (a private international organisation of the United States) this decline is also taking place in the countries of the developing world. But even then the Bureau forecasts the World Population will reach 6182 millions by the end of this century. Whereas food production by that time would be just enough to feed 600 million people. This leaves aside more than 180 million people for whom no food can be arranged even if the total world food production is doubled together for the total world population.

Thus the gravest menace that

threatens the existence of mankind is the evergrowing size of mankind itself. Poverty, hunger, disease and illiteracy are already eating up the vitals of society in the developing countries. Development efforts are largely baffled by the constant addition of extra mouths. This is not however true for the developed countries. Their population increase is well within limit and the rate of fertility is quite low not to cause any concern. Rather, some countries are confronted with negative population growth. The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic according to the Population Reference Bureau are experiencing such negative growth and are having minus point two and minus point four growth rates respectively. Similar is the case with Luxembourg where the rate of growth is minus point one.

By and large the average rate of growth in the North American and European countries is not high and poses no problem. The average rate of growth in the North American countries is 0.6 while that in the European countries is 0.4. These are the lowest rates of population growth regionwise. Among the European countries Albania is said to be having the highest growth rate of 2.5 per cent per

annum while some countries like and Venezuela have the growth rate of more than 3 per cent per annum. And with this rate of increase population of this region will double in 26 years.

Population in Africa increases at the rate of 2.6 per cent per annum. Increase is more pronounced in Eastern Northern and Western Africa with the rates 2.7 per cent 2.8 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively. Africa's 423 million population is likely to double in 27 years if the present rate of growth continues. Some of the North African countries like Libya (3.9%), Algeria (3.2%), Morocco (3.2%) and Sudan (3%) have high rates of population growth.

Asia is the thickly populated continent of the world. Its population of 2325 millions is more than half of the world population. Asia's population increases at a rate of 2 per cent per annum. Considering its present size this rate of increase is quite high to cause serious concern particularly for those countries which have very high density of population. Even then the population in some of the Asian countries continues to increase at a very high rate.

The table below shows population statistics of some selected countries in Asia

Population statistics of some selected Asian Countries

Country	Population mid 77 (millions)	Birth Per 1000	Death per 1000	Rate of growth	Population projection to 2000 (millions)
China	850	27	10	1.7	1126.0
Burma	31.8	40	16	2.4	53.3
India	622.7	34	13	2.1	1023.7
Indonesia	136.9	38	14	2.4	226.3
Iran	34.8	44	18	2.8	66.1
Malaysia	12.6	35	7	2.8	21.6
Nepal	13.2	43	20	2.3	23.2
Pakistan	74.5	44	15	2.9	145.5
Philippines	44.3	35	8	2.7	83.7
Sri Lanka	14.1	28	8	2.0	20.7
Thailand	44.4	35	11	2.4	84.6

like Australia and Belgium have zero population growth.

But the picture is different in the Latin American countries. The rate of growth is highest in this region of the world. The average growth rate per annum is 2.7 per cent. Countries like Mexico, Honduras, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, Para-

Source: Population Reference Bureau, USA

Bangladesh with inhabitants of 1283 persons per square mile is a most densely populated country and also one of the poorest in the world. The rate of population growth is also very high. With gradual decrease of mortality rate over the

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years the rate of growth increased to more than 3 per cent per annum. This rate has though come down to 2.8 per cent after much efforts on the population front the population size is even then likely to cross 150 million mark by the end of this century unless it becomes possible to put a drastic check to fertility. Government is quite alive to this situation and has set targets to bring down rate of population growth to 2.5 per cent by 1978 2 per cent by 1980 and to zero rate by 1985.

Bangladesh is one of the least developed countries. Its living standard for most of the people cannot be said much above sub-human level. We can not even produce enough food for our present populations of 83 million. Through intensified development efforts it may be possible to increase food production. But if the population continues to grow unabated it will remain a dream to achieve self-sufficiency. And in that eventuality the whole nation is likely to face a catastrophe.

Targets set forth to reduce the birth rate though may appear difficult to achieve there is hardly any alternative but to go all out for that if we as a nation want to survive. This is a challenge and all of us must take it in high spirit to meet it. We cannot and must not allow our population to increase further. Responsibility, of course, devolves to a greater extent on those who are directly involved in the job. Particularly the field workers who are in direct contact with the people must put in their best. They will have to take their work with complete dedication and missionary zeal and carry the whole thing as a movement to spread it to the remotest corners of the country. And in no case they will give occasions to the people to look askance about their performance. Active cooperation and support from every conscious citizen is over and above necessary for complete success of the national population programme. (Feature Bureau)