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Admission rush

The parents seeking admission for their wards in city schools now are getting a first hand experience of what could be the aftermath of a population explosion. There are too few seats available and, in one case reported in the Times yesterday, more than one thousand students have applied for ten seats that were put up as vacant by the school authorities. Getting a seat now in a reputable school has become one of the most precious things.

Obviously, there is a stiff competition for the available seats in the schools and the young students must now either go through a veritable ordeal of an admission test or face the consequences of accepting a mediocre school. The rush for admission this year is huge at all levels including at the universities, but it is true that the present crisis or the shortage of available seats is not a phenomenon that has cropped up recently. The crisis was building over the years as the population galloped ahead at the rate of 3.2 per cent annually in the early seventies.

Officially, the rate of increase is now 2.3 per cent, but even such a figure should send shivers down the spines of our economic planners. There are virtually too many people than the state can offer services. The pressure on the education system is already tremendous. There is a very low teacher to student ratio which is direly affecting the quality of education particularly at the primary and at the advanced levels. And this is despite the fact that the government has increased the number of schools in the country and the intakes of the universities have been enlarged.

The country is actually facing now the result of the baby boom in the sixties when population control programmes were in their nascent stage and the social opposition to family planning was immense. Fortunately, many inhibitions against birth control have already faded, but still the programme has not yielded the results that it should have for our own survival.

It is time we looked more critically at the population programmes and the effect that these were having on curtailing birth rates. There is still a lack of authentic information as to the efficacy of the present drives for family planning. Sometimes, the real results are eclipsed by the din of publicity.