Who Will Feed 28 Crore People in 2050?

Shahnoor Wahid explores the ramifications of our burgeoning population

A research finding of the Population Council says that Bangladesh's population will hit the 28 crore mark by 2051. To his writer, this is patently a scary figure. And since we all love this country so very much, we cannot but be alarmed at the galloping rate of population growth, while all the other development indicators move quite slowly upward.

Our concerns that are to be expressed below are journalistic in nature, hence it remains for the population experts of this country to answer them.

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a total area of 55,598 square miles (143,999 kilometres). Presently the density of population is hovering around 900 per square mile. Today, in this small landmass live nearly 14 crore people. But in 1971, only 7.5 crore people lived in the same landmass. The simple equation is, population has doubled in the last 36 years, but the land area has not. It is, rather, predicted that some areas of Bangladesh will go below the sea in the future.

According to a 2005 article on the website of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare: "With a population of 135.2 million and estimated per capita GDP at $421 in FY 2003-04 (Bangladesh Economic Review 2004), Bangladesh remains one of the poorest countries in the world and still faces severe deficiencies in the quality of its health, population and nutrition services."

According Bangladesh: A Country Study, edited by James Heitzman and Robert Wordon, the study states:

"In the 1980s, Bangladesh faced no greater problem than population growth. Census data compiled in 1901 indicated a total of 29 million in East Bengal, the region that became East Pakistan



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