and eventually Bangladesh. By 1951, four years after partition from India, East Pakistan had 44 million people, a number that grew rapidly up to the first post-independence census, taken in 1974, which reported the national population at 71 million. The 1981 census reported a population of 87 million and a 2.3 percent annual growth rate. Thus, in just 80 years, the population had tripled. In July 1988 the population, by then the eighth largest in the world, stood at 109,963,551, and the average annual growth rate was 2.6 percent. According to official estimates, Bangladesh was expected to reach a population of more than 140 million by the year 2000.

The article goes on to state that the population density increased from 216 persons per square kilometer in 1901, to 312 person in 1951. Given another 50 years, in 2000, it was projected to exceed 1,000 persons per square kilometer.

At present, the total fertility rate (TFR) now hovers around 3.08 with no possibility of going down any further, especially with the family planning activities remaining stagnant for years. In some areas TFR is still over 4 and even 5. The present population growth rate is: 2.022%

Now, let us try to comprehend the scenario in the next 36 or 40 years. Will population growth rate by some miracle come down to zero, therefore, will it be still 14 crore then? No, because experts like Population Council has already said that population of Bangladesh will almost double by 2050. It would reach over 28 crore by then! On the other hand, The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare predicts 25 crore around 2080.

So, the questions that come to mind are: Where will these millions of people find land to set up habitat for themselves? If the present size of the cities and towns double in 2050, will there be enough farmland to grow rice and vegetables to feed 28 crore people? Where will they find fresh water to drink and cook food? Will there be enough water-bodies left to breed fish to feed 28 crore people? Will there be any forest left by then? What would be the nature of environment and ecology under these circumstances?

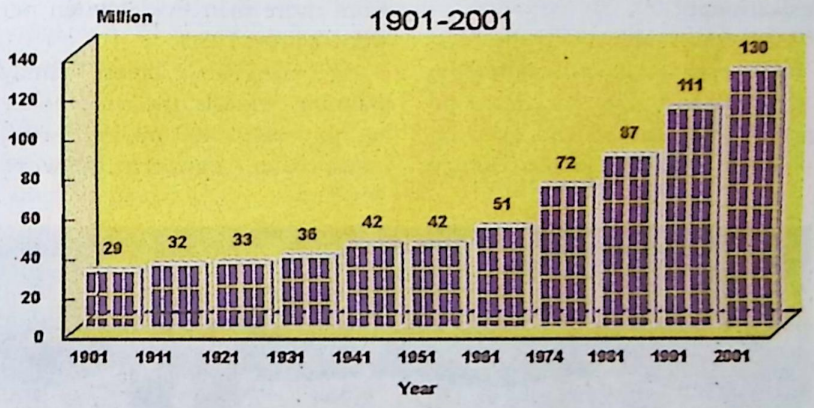
the existing real life scenario tell us that we are looking at a very bleak future. Maybe out of fear we are not really looking at the future. Maybe we are just keeping our heads buried in the sand hoping that the spectre of a burgeoning population would go away soon. But will it?

These are the kinds of questions our journalistic minds will ask, and it is the responsibility of the politicians, policy-makers and experts to come up with factual answers based on the ground reality. But it is widely felt that questions concerning the growing population make most of them uncomfortable, and they often fumble for answers. They try to explain it as "asset" or "human resource." But can millions of malnourished, uneducated, and unskilled people really be much of a resource? Where shall we have that many educational and skill development training institutions to turn them into a resource by 2050? Will this country progress at lightning speed in the next 42 years and be able to employ the millions of unemployed?

Facts and figures tell us that population growth is going haywire without pragmatic policies, shifts in policies (e.g. from domiciliary to clinic-based service), lack of implementation of whatever policies are there, lack of initiative from the officials concerned, lack of motivation and drive from the field staff, and multi-faceted obstacles coming from some quarters in society that are against family planning.

As a result, about 25 lakh newborns are being added to the population every year. Do our food, education, health, housing, water, electricity and employment policies integrate these realities in the yearly review? Do our politicians and government policy-makers feel the urgency to think about the situation in 2050 and beyond?

Population Size in Bangladesh : 10 Years Interval



Source: Prof. Ahmad A.N. Neaz

China and India experience

For academic purpose, let us take a look at the population policy of China and India and see what these two countries are doing to check the growth.

Presently, the world's population is estimated at 6.6 billion. And China's population today stands at 1,321,851,888 (as of mid-2007), thus making it the world's most populous country, home to 20% of the world's population. One in every five people on the planet is a resident of China.