and developing countries where overpopulation is a big threat to the environment, ecology, law and order, security, food production and supply, land distribution, employ-ment opportunities, poverty allevia-tion, water resources, waste disposal system, health care, sanitation, and so on.

While many Chinese and foreign academics agree and appreciate that China has managed to limit its population growth successfully, academics like Prof. Wang Feng of the University of California believe this reduction is mainly due to a fall in the fertility rate in the 1970s, rather than any more recent initiatives.

Whatever the reason, the fact remains that China has 400 million less people today than it might have had otherwise. It is believed by other scholars that the fall in fertility rates is, at least partly, due to improving social and economic conditions in China.

Family planning experts are of the opinion that many other Asian countries like Thailand and South Korea, literacy, employment, modernization, and lifestyle have encouraged women to take fewer children without following any China like strict family planning policies.

Chinese officials further say that the "current fertility rate is between 1.7 and 1.8 births per woman, well below the 2.1 births needed to keep the population at a stable level." The opposing view to the Chinese official claim is that this will result in having increasing proportion of older people, a smaller workforce, and a disproportionate number of boys to girls.

Well, there may be some side effects, but the fact remains that China has managed to prevent the birth of an extra 400 million. That alone is enough to come to the conclusion that the world is slightly better off without that many extra mouths. Theory may say a lot of things, but reality says the opposite. Feeding 400 million extra mouths would have taken a massive toll on China's economy.

India's population control experience

India's population of approxi-mately 1.13 billion people comprises approximately one-sixth of the world's population. India is expected to overtake China by 2030 and will then be the most populous country in the world. Many experts theorise that India will be the first country to hit the 2 billion mark.

Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, it supports over 17.5% of the world's population. 31.8% of Indians are younger than 15 years of age.

According to one source: "In 1952, India was the first country in the world to launch a mass media campaign to spread the concept of family planning in response to its ever growing population. Most developing nations soon followed suit. While the campaigns have had varying degrees of success, they have made a significant impact overall.

"The current projections predict that India will overtake China's position as most populous nation by 2050. However, India's total fertility rate has declined by more than 40 percent since the 1960s, and today the average number of children per woman is around 3 (three). The country's most recent approach to population issues focuses on the advancement of women economically, academically, and socially, as independent women are more likely to have small families. This is a change from the darker days of India's population policy. In the 1970s, the government declared a population 'state of emergency,' began implementing forced sterilizations in the nation's poorest regions, and even rewarded medical workers who performed the most operations. The national focus on sterilization hindered women's acceptance of family planning, as many considered birth control an all-or-nothing proposition and chose to forgo it entirely.

"India's population policy addresses advocating child spacing, informing women and men about the range and availability of contraceptive methods, promoting small family size, and presenting

POP Facts

- Between 1750 and 1940, population of developed countries increased five-fold, whereas for less developed or developing countries it only doubled. But after 1940, the scenario reversed.
- Russia recorded zero to minus population growth in the 1990s. From 150 million, it has come down to 130 million.
- According to demographer Tom Merrick, world popula-tion will be 11 billion by 2090.
- At present, 87% of world population live in less developed countries, whereas 13% live in developed countries.
- In Bangladesh, people of low income groups have four children on average, whereas those of higher income groups have two.