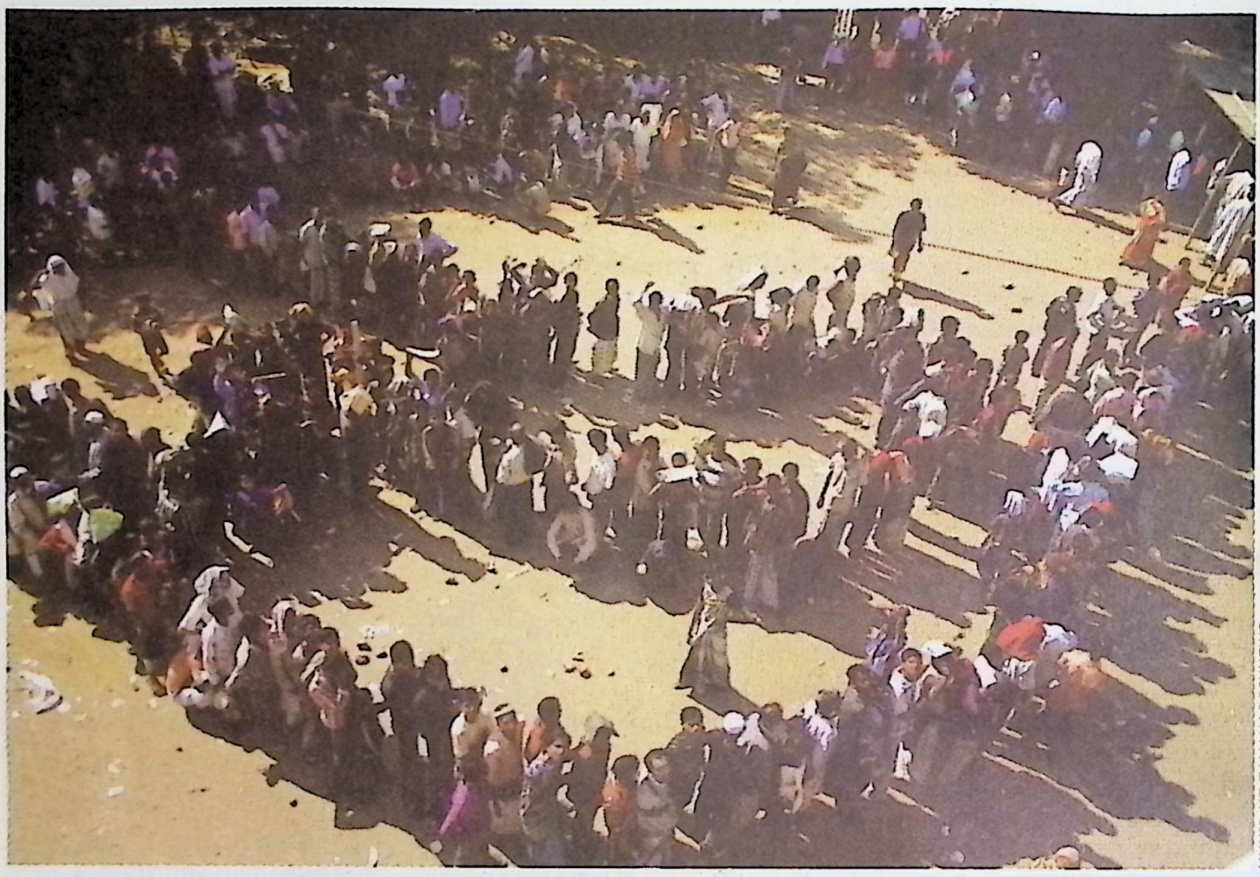


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sterilization in a more humane light. Another key issue that Indian public information campaigns have widely targeted is favouritism for boy children, a deeply ingrained tradition that drives couples to have more children."

Conclusion

Bangladesh at the moment is faced with a number of problems like rising food shortage; shrinking of farmland and water bodies; depleting forest resources; widespread health problems like malnutrition and tuberculosis; and social problems like increasing number of unskilled manpower, increasing rate of unemployment, and an increasing number of unemployed youth getting involved in criminal activities. Poverty is forcing poor people to sell off their small piece of land and migrate to the cities in search of work. These problems cannot be seen in isolation because these are leaving their mark on our overall development process.

To check the imminent population explosion, government, NGOs and international development partners have to work in a concerted manner, taking all the social and economic factors into consideration. As for the country's population control policy is concerned observers notice anomalies in facts and figures given by various organisations and agencies and individual researchers. Even MOHFW agrees that: "After declining rapidly in the 1980s, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) seems to have remained unchanged for most of the 1990s at 3.3 children (BDHS 1999-2000), although different surveys gave different results."

We believe such anomalies need to be removed so that we can have a clear picture of the enormity of the problem. In the words of MOHFW: "Further efforts are needed to shift family planning use patterns towards more effective, longer lasting, and lower-cost clinical and permanent methods covering low performing and disadvantaged areas with added emphasis. But the major impact on fertility will be achieved by raising the age of marriage, which will push up age at first birth, and again trigger a tempo effect, to bring fertility down. Bangladesh has great scope to reduce early marriage, where at present 50 percent of teenage girls (15-19) are married, compared to only 33 percent in India, 25 percent in Pakistan, and far fewer in other comparable countries."

Having said it all, the bottom line is, we have to leave aside any romanticism we may have as far as population is concerned and tackle it with strong determination.

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