

POPULATION GROWTH

One major problem that the world faces today is the rapid growth of population often referred to as **population explosion** until about 800AD the world's population stayed below 200 million. Since then it has been rising dramatically. The rise has been varying rapidly in the 20th century. The population has recently risen to about six billion which is three times more than it was in 1960. The rate of increase is quite alarming.

This enormous increase of population is due to better food, better hygiene and above all, the advances made in medicine. Rapid developments in modern medicine have conquered many diseases and consequently the death rate has decreased. Until the beginning of the 19th century most people died before the age of 50. Today in the developed countries the average life span has risen to more than 70 years. The population goes on increasing at an alarming rate in spite of the practice of birth control in many parts of the world. Thomas Malthus, a British mathematician and economist went to the extent of declaring that, if unchecked, human population would grow in geo-metric progression (i.e. 2,4,16 and so on) while food production could only grow in arithmetic progression (i.e. 2,4,6,8 and so on).

With a population of over one billion, India is the second most populous country in the World. (China is the first) India's population has risen drastically since 1950. The population today is $2\frac{1}{2}$ times as large as it was in 1950. It is rising by 2.9 percent per year, and as a result every year an extra 26 million people are to be provided with food, shelter and other facilities.

Government is taking measures to check the population growth and that a large percentage of people practice birth control. Recent advances in farming have made the country productive enough to feed the present population. Experts predict that by 2020 there will be about ten billion people suffering from serious problems like hunger, overcrowding of a place and environmental pollution. Failure to arrest further increase of population may have disastrous effects though there seems to be some truth in the statement by Julian Simon of the University of Maryland. According to him, population growth means not only **more mouths to feed**, but also "**more hands to work and more brains to think.**"

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