

## World population to reach 9b in next 50 years

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 23: The world's population, expected to reach six billion in October, will be nearly nine billion by the year 2050, according to the latest UN estimate on Monday, reports Reuters.

"Fifty years from now the UN population division projects a much larger world population than exists today. We are anticipating a world close to nine billion inhabitants," the Division's Director, Joseph Chamie, told the UN Commission on Population and Development.

"I hope we are wrong," he added. "I hope that this projection for the world's population turns out to be far too high."

But he said a UN projection for the year 2000 calculated 40 years ago was remarkably accurate in predicting a figure of slightly more than six billion. Even though in the aftermath World War Two, when the world population was slightly above two billion, he believed it would nearly triple by the end of the century.

Chamie said the population increase of some three billion by the year 2050 was expected to take place in less developed regions.

While the population of the more developed regions was

projected to remain essentially unchanged at 1.2 billion that in the less developed regions was expected to grow from 4.8 billion now to 7.8 billion by the year 2050.

He said India alone would grow by 50 per cent in the next five decades, from one billion to 1.53 billion, and would be the largest country in the world.

Nigeria and Pakistan would both grow even more rapidly, by roughly 120 per cent from 156 million to 345 million for Pakistan and from 112 million to 244 million for Nigeria.

China now has the world's biggest population. Chamie gave no figure but it is generally estimated at some 1.2 billion.

But he said China's fertility rate, which in 1950 was among the world's highest with approximately 6.2 children per couple was now well below replacement level — at 1.8 children per couple.

Chamie gave no reason for this but Beijing enforces a strict "one child per family" birth control policy.

He said that between now and 2050 the populations of 30 countries were projected to decline. They include Germany, from 82 million to 73 million, Japan, from 126 million to 105 million, and Russia, from 147 million to 121 million.