

Population growth rate 2.36 pc

140 million by 2000 AD

By A Staff Reporter

The population of Bangladesh is now growing at a rate of 2.36 per cent and by the year 2000 there will be about 140 million (14 crore) humans on this soil.

Between 1974 and 1981 the population growth rate was 2.32 per cent. There were 35 live births, and 12 deaths per thousand population during the period, the final report of the 1981 census says.

Releasing the final report at a news conference in Dhaka on

Sunday, Planning Minister Dr. Abdul Majed Khan said that it was based on 100 per cent analysis of all the questionnaire of the census.

The census was conducted between March 6, 7 and 8, 1981, and the preliminary report announced by the end of June that year. There was a 3.1 per cent undercounting, and a post enumeration check on a sample basis was made to make good the gap.

Dr Khan termed the completion of the final report on the basis of 100 per cent analysis of data in three and a half years as a remarkable achievement not only in the subcontinent but also in the world.

The report of the 1974 census which also took three and a half years to complete was based on only five per cent of the questionnaires.

Members of the Planning Commission, the Secretary of Statistics Division, representatives from UNDP and UNFPA local offices, university teachers and other senior civil officials were present at the news conference.

Dr Khan said that improved methods and technology were used to extract reliable data from the 1981 census. Moreover the efficiency of the officials and

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staff of the Statistical Division was not only up to international standard but also remarkable in some cases.

While congratulating the officials and staff for their work, the Minister said it was a day of pride for the nation because of its demonstration of the ability to get done the great work that was so urgently needed by planners, economists, and development workers.

The census was conducted at a total cost of Taka 100 million (excluding the costs behind permanent infrastructure). This included Taka 30 million worth of technical assistance from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

A total of 211 thousand enumerators did the counting under the guidance of 47 thousand supervisors at the grassroot level for three days. The overall supervision was done by the Statistical Division officials up to the upazila level.

FINDINGS

The final report of the Census '81 released on Sunday shows that of the total 89.9 million population of that time there were 106 males for 100 females.

The urban population comprised 15 per cent of the population. However, in the census urban area was redefined to include also the upazila headquarters and hat and bazars with electricity which together accounted for 3.8 million of the total 13.2 million urban population of that time.

The rural urban migration rate came to four per cent. The number of floating or transient population was 0.8 million which was slightly less than one per cent of the total population.

GROWTH RATE

About the 2.3 per cent population growth rate shown on the basis of the information that there were 35 live births compared to 12 deaths per thousand between 1974 and 81, Mr. Golam

Rabbani, Secretary, Statistical Division, said it was worked out through dependable sampling as there was no universal vital registration of births and deaths.

Asked why the figure about the population growth rate differed so sharply with those of international agencies like the World Bank, he said while the international agencies based their data on previous census reports, the Statistical Division computed the rate by way of annual demographic surveys.

AGE STRUCTURE

The census showed that children from 0 to 4 years comprised 17 per cent of the total population while those from 5 to 14 years comprised 29.6 per cent. Exactly 50 per cent of the population were in the ages of 15 to 64 years, while those in the age of 65 and above constituted 3.4 per cent.

There were a total of 15.1 million household units 2.2 million of which were in urban areas. Of the total dwelling units 59.9 per cent were made of straw and bamboo, 35.5 per cent made of C.I. sheet and wood, 2.8 per cent made of cement and bricks, and 2.4 per cent tile roofed. The average size of each household was 5.7.

Only 38.7 per cent of the households owned cultivable land, 7.3 per cent owned boat while 4.4 per cent owned bullock cart. The census found that 20 per cent of the households had neither homestead nor farmland, 10 per cent had homestead but no farmland, while another 20 per cent of the households had farmland below half an acre each.

According to the final report of the census, there were 23.6 million people with economic participation (of the ages of

10 and above). Of this labour force only 40 per cent were economically active. Over 61 per cent of the total labour force was engaged in agriculture.

FERTILITY

The report showed that there were over 15 million married women in the reproductive age group of 15 to 49 years. However, the average age at marriage of women came down from 14 and a half years in 1961 to 17 and a half years in 1981.

The Statistics Division Secretary disclosed that only 65 per cent of women of the ages of 15 to 19 years were found to be married in 1981 compared to the earlier per centage of 85 in the same age group.

Among the male population of 10 years and above 55.9 per cent were married, 1.2 per cent widowed and 0.1 per cent divorced. Of the total female population of ten years and above 63.4 per cent were found married, 11.8 per cent widowed, and 1.1 per cent found divorced.

LITERACY RATE

The rate of literacy of the population of five years and above was found to be 23.8 per cent in 1981—31.0 per cent for males and 16 per cent for females.

This time, however, a stricter definition of literacy was followed. A man who could write a letter was considered literate. The earlier definition included one who could sign his name. Based on the earlier definition the literacy rate rose from 18.1 per cent in 1961 to 20.7 per cent in 1974 and finally to 32.7 per cent in 1981.