"If unprecedented population growth continues, future generations of children will not have adequate food, housing, medical care, education, earth resources and employment opportunities," quotes SL Richman (World & I, June1993) the 1985 statement on population stabilization, signed by more than 40 world leaders.

Other authors of similar doom, who have been advocating 'massive social change, including coercive population control measures, appear more aggressive. Their suggestion to reverse 'the mad spasm of consumption and thoughtless waste in the 20th century" has crossed the reasonable limits of pessimism. They insist that "the great-grandchildren of today's young people would have to share the planet with only a ragged cohort of adaptable species dominated by rats, cockroaches, weeds, microbes. The world in which they survived would consist largely of deserts, eroded mountains, dead coral reefs and barren oceans, all buffeted by extremes of weather (Eugene Linden, Time, special fall 1992 issue).

The present day dialogue of scarcity of resources seems to take much food from the popular hook, Limits to Growth (Report of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Club of Rome), which is based on the "axiom" of zero-technological growth. The 1974 World Population Conference (Bucharest) which, Paul Gallaghe suggests, was the golem of that 'most widely promoted frauds in history," the 1971 Limits to Growth, had no answer to tielga Zepp (now wife of the US statesman and economists Lyndon la Rouche), when she explained, as a crucial example, that "fusion energy breakthroughs could completely redefine all economic resources by providing inexhaustible nuclear electrical energy." Overlooking all sound reasoning, the anti-population "experts" came for yet another showdown at the World Population Conference at Cairo (September 1994), whose objective was nothing less than 'forced population reduction goals as a condition for aid and loans to all nations." The mindless recipient nations are, on their part, pleased to go for "condoms" and other such instruments of "cannibalism", for which ample "aid" is readily available.

Let us, for the moment, put aside the political and moral aspects of the issue and try to study the demographic problem from pure socioeconomic perspective.

The intention here is not to provide empirical evidence how a certain degree of economic uplift helps retard population growth. We would rather survey a few selected indicators, in broader global perspective, to prove that economic and social well-being and national prosperity never occur in a situation of stagnated
and retarding population growths.

Stumbling across a newspaper article, people might become dimly aware of a few developments, but they generally tend not to notice and duly appreciate many more things in their "nose-to-grindstone existence." While they gaze at the steady increase in population, they "overlook the invention of mundane new manufacturing techniques, that nevertheless attract capital, provide jobs, create wealth, and improving the infrastructure and the quality of human life."

The so-called "pollyannaish" optimists deserve to be listened to, when they put forward sound arguments to prove that a growing population is "actually having a positive effect on the quality of human life in the decades and centuries ahead." In their view, "every new person who appears on earth not only drains his or her share of the planet's resources but brings muscle and mind as well to hear to invent new technology, to increase food production, and in general, to solve problems that afflict humanity." The few arguments that follow would prove how in the grand universal scheme, the Divine Providence manifests itself and that it is no mere "dangerous supposition... (which) ventures into the murky grounds of self-delusion," as some liberals apprehend.

**Evidence from History**

In the 2nd century AC, a Christian theologian, Tertullian, looked around Carthage and said, "Our numbers are burdensome to the world, which can hardly support us." Two hundred years later, St. Jerome also worried that "the world is already full and the population is too large for the soil." And then came Thomas Malthus pressing through his Essay on the Principles of Population some tough questions on population growth and diminishing resources at the end of the 18th century. Anyone can see that life is better today with 5-6 billion population than it was in 10,000 BC, when estimatedly 5 million people inhabited the world, or in AC 1, when population rose to 250 million, or 1650, when 545 million people lived on the earth. If it is not be-cause of the "pressure" of more people, what is the explanation for today's progress and abundance, in sharp contrast to the mass deprivation and scarcity in the past?

When humanists "dismiss" the pure Malthusian arguments of population, it implies they agree with Julian Simon who notes that the world population has grown in spurts in response to its proved economic and health conditions. The growth then slows "until the next big surge."

But Malthus' disciples and "brothers-in-faith" need not feel much disappointed with their dismal record of predictions. None of these "prophets of apocalypse" has done better. Is it not hard to believe that right in the fourth decade of this 20th century, demographic "experts" lamented if man were doomed - because his numbers were "dwindling to dangerously low levels?" So commonly appearing in the professional and population journals during the '30s were
articles titled such as "World Suicide by Birth Control." These "experts" never envisioned the post-World War II baby boom, that itself then set off counter predictions of catastrophic overpopulation. The outcry was once again subdued when by the mid-60s the baby boom was over. Sure, the current rhetoric would also not last very long. All that we see is that "history’s habit of making fools of prognosticators has not kept new ones from rushing in where more modest men fear to tread." Paul Ehrlich, widely accepted as the guru of population control establishment, who had been suggesting "coercion where voluntary methods fail," worried about two decades back that "the battle to feed all of humanity is over," and predicted that soon hundred of millions would starve to death, even if crash programs were vigorously pursued. It did not happen, even without crash programs.

**Population and Economic Growth**

A presumption that has become the staple of development literature, of the environmentalists' thoughts, of the UN Population Fund and of the score of national population control establishments, is that when population grows vigorously it inhibits economic development and degrades the quality of life. The anti-natalists feel currently joyfully satisfied with the evidence that the female fertility rates have declined by "about one fourth or more in many less-developed countries between the '60s and '80s..., closing half-way or so to "zero-population" growth..., and in the developed countries the most ideal fertility rate of 2 had been achieved by 1986." What they ignore is that corresponding to the decline of population growth the economies of these countries have also witnessed a downfall.

For reasons whatsoever, all or most of these learned men and women cannot for do not] wish to observe the striking phenomena of remarkable economic strides along with dramatic population growth. Soon after World War II, Hong Kong was poor. Between 1951 and 1987, its population "increased by 2.78 times" - close to 6 million people living in 400 square miles or a density of 14,000 persons per square mile. The same small enclave was the largest exporter in the underdeveloped world even as back as 1969. Hong Kong is not the only example. Similar has been the story of all rapidly growing economies whose growth is found positively related to high population growth.

We see that the population is growing faster in the Third World, as compared to Western countries. But contrary to the perception that the Third World is economically doomed, the World Bank reports that "from 1966 to 1980, real gross national product per person grew in the developing world at an average rate of 3.4 percent - a faster rate than population growth in many of those countries. In the industrial countries, the average rate of growth in per capita output during the same period was 3.1 percent."

The UNDP Human Development Report (1990) provides some useful statistics
about 130 countries, ranking from Niger, the poorest, to Japan, the richest. Of all these countries, 23 excelled Pakistan in respect of population density, yet their overwhelming majority was socially and economically much better. Only countries like Burundi, India, Rwanda and Bangladesh appeared lagging behind Pakistan in one or two aspects, mainly because of social and political reasons rather than pure demographic factors.

Quality of Life

For any society, material prosperity is certainly important, yet it is not the sole criterion to judge the quality of life. For most people non-material things value more. Thomas Sowell (1993) suggests and many others agree that in the final analysis "no values are really material because what we seek from even material things is some sort of psychic satisfaction." The social scientists are misguided in a sense that while observing a certain population, they impose their own values on the target people and wish them to believe what these scientists consider right. For instance, the "crowdedness" is considered something the people should want to avoid. Why it is then so that most people choose to live in high-density areas? They rather pay a high premium for that. We know that the cost of living is much higher in the cities and urban industrial centres, yet the rural population is continuously migrating to metropolitans. What are they going there for? Better employment opportunities and a whole array of social amenities - essential components of improved quality of life -are what they seek and get there. This preference of the people to move from scarcely populated areas to densely populated quarters is a clear indicator that prosperity is linked with high population density.

Long life expectancy and low infant mortality are two important indicators of better quality of life. Global evidence is that since the rapid increase in population in the 17th century, the two indices have steadily improved. Same is the case of Pakistan as revealed by its socioeconomic history of five decades, where graphs illustrating population growth and life expectancy look nearly identical. And, in spite of all pitfalls and misdeeds in the social sector planning and programming, the infant mortality rate has been steadily declining in Pakistan.

No one would disagree that the loss of morale is detrimental to the productivity of people. Well then, is it morale boosting to deprive a couple of the very basic human right how many children the family should have? Those who invite the government to intervene, in fact, seek to resort to "sterile measures" like the per capita income. Measures of per capita may have their uses, but Peter Bauer (1993) tells us something else:

"In the economics of population, national income per head founders completely as a measure of welfare. It takes no account of the satisfaction people derive from having children or from living longer. The birth of a child immediately reduces income per head for a family and also for the country as a whole. The
death of the same child has the opposite effect, Yet... the first event is a blessing and the second a tragedy. Ironically, the birth of child is registered as a reduction in national income per head, while the birth of a farm animal shows up as an improvement."

So, here we face the extreme of anti-humanism that human beings, considered by the biologists only homo-sapiens, are rated by the economists-demographers worst than the goat and sheep.

**Population and Food**

The American environmentalist, Lester Brown, is the leading doomsayer who predicts a huge grain shortage in the East, particularly China, over the next few decades, that no one will be able to meet. This pessimism is based not on any real fall in food production but the observation that Asians with more money to spend would like to have more and better food. The argument, for instance, goes like this: "A common Chinese could expect to eat about 8 kilograms of meat in 1977; he now eats 32 kilograms. In terms of chicken meat, where meat/grain conversion ratio is 1:2, it means a fourfold increase in demand of grains used for feed." Reckoning increase in consumption on such a scale, a question is then asked, "who can supply so much grain?" And the spontaneous reply then given is, "no one."

As noted earlier, the pessimists have continuously been refuted by historic advances that have always overcome such warnings. The world population was about 3 billion in 1960 and will be close to double in the next few years. The rate of food production during 1960 to 1990 has outpaced population growth by 20 percent. That increase was considered enough to cause a 60 percent drop in real prices of food commodities. It shows there is little reason to worry.

Hunger has not disappeared. The World Bank estimates that some 750 million people in the world were still malnourished, but the chance of outright famine today is only 10 percent of what was feared during the '60s. The global calorie intake has increased by 25 percent during the same period, indicative of better health and nutrition.

A strong and persuasive agency like FAO, the torchbearer of Malthusian school, once used to assert that "a lifetime of malnutrition and actual hunger is the lot of at least two-thirds of mankind" (*The Economist*, August 23,1952). In its World Food Report (1986), FAO had to admit: "In Asia 20 years ago, half of mankind lived on a quarter of the world's food, and the prospects of that area ever producing sufficient food looked bleak indeed. Yet, today food self-sufficiency is close at hand in many Asian countries."

The Pakistan economy and food situation is said to be constrained due to population which has increased about four times since independence. The
statement, however, proves baseless when we look at the figures of food availability over the past five decades. A few important indicators, as given in the Economic Survey (1994-95). Although agriculture sector in Pakistan has not received due attention and gross mismanagement has lagged us far behind against comparable economies, the food supply situation indicates a better and sustained growth to more than offset the effect of increase in population.

**Population And Employment**

The apprehension that high population growth is responsible for unemployment is baseless. The West did not experience long-term mass unemployment during its period of rapid population growth. The world's economic recession and mass unemployment was recorded in the 1930s, which is also the period of birth dearth. Pakistan was facing scarcity of labor in key sectors of economy during the '60s, which is the decade of highest population growth (3.6 percent) in its history. During the '70s, when the population growth rate dropped to 3 percent, we had fewer jobs for our labor force and had to beg the booming Middle East economies for its absorption.

Looking for the real factors of unemployment anywhere and at any time of the history, one always comes across the underlying political causes: minimum wage laws, wage rigidities produced by powerful labor unions, centralization of authority and control, which ultimately ends up into decreased economic activity and many more such government restrictions that do not allow the labour market free hand.

Those who argue that population growth brings unemployment fail to understand that they contradict themselves. On the one hand, when they emphasise the amount of resources each person uses, they appear to believe that people only consume and do not produce ideas and goods. Yet when they warn that "overpopulation" causes unemployment, they seem to believe that people only produce and never consume. In fact, it is the question of demand; people demand things as well as produce them, and additional people create new production and employment opportunities.

**The Issue of Scarce Resources**

What we have briefly discussed so far would lose much of its force and meaning if the human race was running out of land. But there seems to be little danger of that. Estimatedly, the current world population inhabits no more than 3 percent of the land surface of the earth, and the amount of habitable land is not limited. Also, when deep concern is shown at the continuously falling land: man ratio as a result of the population growth, one fails to observe that land productivity is simultaneously increasing at a much faster rate. "The gravest fallacy of economic analysis is the assumption that something is static, when, in fact, it is variable." It also loses sight of the enormous possibilities, such as fusion energy, laser-
industrial and laser-chemical processes, hydroponics agriculture or space biotechnologies, available to the human species.

The belief that people "breed like dogs, pigs and rats" and that they have no regard for the consequences to themselves and hence need must be trained how to manage their family life is grossly erroneous and offensive. We are told that families in the advanced countries decide more intelligently how many children to have. It implies that people of the less developed South are considered indifferent fools. It is an insult to their humanity. No matter what the "poor" people decide, they always regulate family size according to their circumstances, constraints and incentives. The most outstanding proof is that even the highly fertile women living at the lowest ebb of decency do never have all the children they could bear.

**Conclusion**

What has been said proves that the intriguing issue of overpopulation is overplayed. Factor that truly determines whether an economy progresses or stagnates is its institutions that permit, rather encourage, human ingenuity to work free. The comparison of the centrally planned and regimented communist economies and those allowing free market mechanism more than substantiate that claim. Freedom of action, property rights and contracts guaranteed through rule of law, provide the key to lasting prosperity. No matter how we define quality of life, all evidence indicates that it is best enhanced when political authorities restrain using unlimited power, letting the free human will and creativity work and also do not let the Malthusians to freeze population growth through unnatural means. These are some useful lessons that we gratefully welcome from the West. But why should we in Pakistan, or elsewhere in the Third World submit to play at the tune set by others for their own national security demands, and that too at the expense of our own national security and true welfare. That, in fact, is doom.

The argument of scarce resources is based on sheer misconception. Those who advance it fail to comprehend the mighty arrangements Allah has made for feeding and sustaining the human race. As they approach the problem from an utterly narrow materialistic angle, they simply ignore the system of Providence Allah has made. The materialists' fears have proved baseless in the past and there is no reason to believe that they're going to prove true tomorrow. The Lord of the Universe has promised in clear words.

"Of course, We have created everything to a set measure,',

(Qur'an, 54:44)

"And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures thereof:
and We send it not down save in accord with appointed measure.’

(Qur'an, 15:21)