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## The Indian Urban Scene

AS per 1991 Census, a little more than a quarter of India's population, numbering 217 million, lived in the urban areas. The number of people in urban areas in 1981 was 159 million only. 58 million persons were added to the urban population in the last decade indicating a decennial growth rate of 36 per cent. This decennial growth rate was much less than that registered during 1971-81 (46 per cent). The level of our urbanisation, denoted by the ratio of the urban population to total population, was 25.72 per cent in 1991 as against 23.34 per cent in 1981 and 19.91 per cent in 1971. That is, the increase of 2.38 per cent in the level of urbanisation recorded during last decade was much less than that witnessed

TABLE 1 : TREND OF URBANISATION IN INDIA

| Census Year | No. of UAs/ Towns | Total Population | Urban Population | Urban population as percentage of total population | Decennial growth rate of urban population | Tempo of Urbanisation (per cent per year) |                                      |  |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|--|
|             |                   |                  |                  |  |   | Annual exponential growth rate            | Annual gain in % of urban population | Annual rate of gain in % of urban Population |
| (1)         | (2)               | (3)              | (4)              | (5)  | (6)                                       | (7)                                       | (8)                                  | (9)  |
| 1901        | 1827              | 238,396,327      | 25,851,873       | 10.84  |   |   |                                      |  |
| 1911        | 1815              | 252,093,390      | 25,941,633       | 10.29  | 0.35                                      | 0.03                                      | -0.06                                | -0.51  |
| 1921        | 1949              | 251,321,213      | 28,086,167       | 11.18  | 8.27                                      | 0.79                                      | 0.09                                 | 0.86   |
| 1931        | 2072              | 278,977,238      | 33,455,989       | 11.99  | 19.12                                     | 1.75                                      | 0.08                                 | 0.72   |
| 1941        | 2250              | 318,660,580      | 44,153,297       | 13.86  | 31.97                                     | 2.77                                      | 0.19                                 | 1.56   |
| 1951        | 2843              | 361,088,090      | 62,443,709       | 17.29  | 41.42                                     | 3.47                                      | 0.34                                 | 2.47   |
| 1961        | 2365              | 439,234,771      | 78,936,603       | 17.97  | 26.41                                     | 2.34                                      | 0.07                                 | 0.41   |
| 1971        | 2590              | 548,159,652      | 109,113,977      | 19.91  | 38.23                                     | 3.21                                      | 0.19                                 | 1.08   |
| 1981        | 3378              | 683,329,097      | 159,462,547      | 23.34  | 46.14                                     | 3.83                                      | 0.34                                 | 1.72   |
| 1991        | 3768              | 844,324,222      | 217,177,625      | 25.72  | 36.19                                     | 3.09                                      | 0.24                                 | 1.02   |

Notes: 1. As 1981 Census was not conducted in Assam, the 1981 population figures for India include interpolated figures for Assam  
2. The 1991 Census has not been held in Jammu & Kashmir. The 1991 population figures for India include projected figures for Jammu & Kashmir as projected by the Standing Committee of Experts on Population Projections (October 1989)

SOURCE : All the tables in this paper have been made out from Census of India Paper n of 1991, Provisional Population Totals; Rural-Urban distribution, Registrar General, India; August, 1991

during the earlier decade (3.43 per cent), implying that the annual gain in the percentage of urban population was just 0.24 per cent in the last decade as against 0.34 per cent during the preceding decade. In other words, the tempo of urbanisation had considerably declined in the last decade, despite the fact that we are still at a very low level of urbanisation (Table 1).

The urban-rural growth differential which was expected to go up has declined during the last decade. It is not only that the annual rate of growth of urban population has gone down but the rate of growth of rural population has actually gone up during the last decade. The annual growth rate of rural population which had declined from 1.96 per cent in 1961-71 to 1.78 in 1971-81 went up to 1.80 in 1981-91. Coupled with the sharp decline in the rate of growth of urban population, the increase in the rate of growth of rural population is one of the most astonishing and shocking results of 1991 Census. The urban-rural growth differential (URGD) was 1.25, 2.05 and 1.29 per cent respectively in the last three decades. When we look at the URGDs for various states, the results of 1991 Census are even more shocking. In West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Bihar, there has been very sharp decline in URGD between 1971-81 and 1981-91. In Bihar, the URGD came down from 2.49 in 1971-81 to 0.62 in 1981-91, in Tamil Nadu the decline was from 1.25 to 0.56 and in case of West Bengal, it was from 0.91 to 0.47 per cent (Table 2).

TABLE 2: ANNUAL EXPONENTIAL GROWTH RATE: URBAN, RURAL AND THEIR DIFFERENCE (URGD), INDIA AND 15 MAJOR STATES *India/State*

|                  | Average annual exponential growth rate of population |         |         |         |         |         | Urban-rural growth differential |         |      |
|------------------|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------------------------------|---------|------|
|                  | Urban  |         |         | Rural   |         |         |                                 |         |      |
|                  | 1971-81  | 1981-91 | 1961-71 | 1971-81 | 1981-91 | 1961-71 | 1971-81                         | 1981-91 |      |
| 1961-71          |  |         |         |         |         |         |                                 |         |      |
| (1)              | (2)  | (3)     | (4)     | (5)     | (6)     | (7)     | (8)                             | (9)     | (10) |
| INDIA            | 3.21   | 3.83    | 3.09    | 1.96    | 1.78    | 1.80    | 1.25                            | 2.05    | 1.29 |
| 1 Andhra Pradesh | 2.92   | 3.96    | 3.55    | 1.67    | 1.57    | 1.67    | 1.25                            | 2.39    | 1.88 |
| 2 Assam          | 5.01   | 3.27    | 3.27    | 2.82    | 2.00    | 1.98    | 2.19                            | 1.27    | 1.29 |
| 3 Bihar          | 3.64   | 4.37    | 2.65    | 1.76    | 1.88    | 2.03    | 1.88                            | 2.49    | 0.62 |
| 4 Gujarat        | 3.44   | 3.47    | 2.90    | 2.26    | 2.01    | 1.39    | 1.18                            | 1.46    | 1.51 |
| 5 Harvna         | 3.04   | 4.67    | 3.58    | 2.74    | 2.00    | 1.85    | 0.30                            | 2.67    | 1.73 |
| 6 Karnataka      | 3.07   | 4.10    | 2.55    | 1.91    | 1.75    | 1.58    | 1.11                            | 2.35    | 0.97 |
| 7 Kerala         | 3.05   | 3.19    | 4.76    | 2.20    | 1.46    | 0.32    | 0.85                            | 1.73    | 4.44 |
| 8 Madhya Pradesh | 3.83   | 4.45    | 3.71    | 2.39    | 1.76    | 2.00    | 1.44                            | 2.69    | 1.71 |
| 9 Maharashtra    | 3.47   | 3.36    | 3.27    | 2.01    | 1.62    | 1.68    | 1.41                            | 1.74    | 1.59 |
| 10 Orissa        | 5.09   | 5.22    | 3.08    | 2.01    | 1.46    | 1.59    | 3.08                            | 3.76    | 1.49 |
| 11 Punjab        | 2.25   | 3.68    | 2.56    | 1.88    | 1.61    | 1.56    | 0.37                            | 2.07    | 1.00 |
| 12 Rajasthan     | 3.25   | 4.62    | 3.31    | 2.20    | 2.43    | 2.24    | 0.96                            | 2.10    | 1.07 |
| 13 Tamil Nadu    | 3.27   | 2.47    | 1.76    | 1.51    | 1.22    | 1.20    | 1.76                            | 1.25    | 0.56 |
| 14 Uttar Pradesh | 2.68   | 4.74    | 3.20    | 1.67    | 1.80    | 2.02    | 1.01                            | 2.94    | 1.27 |
| 15 West Bengal   | 2.50   | 2.76    | 2.54    | 2.34    | 1.85    | 2.07    | 0.16                            | 0.91    | 0.47 |

A fall in the rural population growth rate is of fundamental importance for increasing the level of urbanisation. Among the fifteen major states of India accounting for 97 per cent of India's population, there has been an increase in the annual growth of rural population during the last decade in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and

Maharashtra. Excepting Maharashtra and Orissa, the rural growth rate in the other four states which was less than 2 per cent per annum earlier had gone up to more than 2 per cent during 1981-91. It went up from 1.88 to 2.03 in case of Bihar, from 1.76 to 2.00 in Madhya Pradesh, from 1.80 to 2.02 in Uttar Pradesh and from 1.85 to 2.07 in West Bengal. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have the unique but dubious distinction of recording a continuous increase in the annual growth rate of their rural populations over the last three decades. The rural growth rate in Bihar went up from 1.76 to 2.03 while that of Uttar Pradesh increased from 1.67 to 2.02 during these three decades. Demographers, social scientists and policy planners must see as to what is happening in these two states. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal are the three other states which need to be looked into. In Rajasthan, the rural growth rate has been too high, being 2.3, 2.4 and 2.2 over the last three decades. In Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal, the rural growth rates increased very sharply over the last decade. Another curious happening is that Maharashtra which is the most urbanised state of India also recorded an increase in its rural growth rate during the last decade.

When compared to the rest of the world, the level of urbanisation in India is very low. The world as a whole had a level of 45 per cent in mid 1990; the highest level being 84-85 per cent in Australia and New Zealand followed by 77 per cent in Japan, between 72 to 75 per cent in North America, South America, Latin America and Europe, 66 per cent in Central America and USSR, and 34 per cent in Africa and Asia. Even Pakistan had an urbanisation level of 32 per cent—much higher than that in India, a level which India would not be able to achieve even by the year 2000.

The levels of urbanisation differ very sharply from state to state. Among the fifteen major states of India, four states had levels above 30 per cent (Maharashtra-39, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu-34 and Karnataka-31), four states had levels between 25 and 30 per cent (Punjab-30, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh-27 and Kerala-26); four states were between 20 to 25 per cent (Haryana-25, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan-23 and Uttar Pradesh-20), while three states had levels below 15 per cent (Orissa and Bihar-13 and Assam-11) (Table 3). We can easily see from above that the states with higher per capita incomes had higher levels of urbanisation while states with lower per capita incomes were at lower levels of urbanisation.

Comparing the decennial growth rates of urban population over last two decades, we find that the states which were less urbanised in 1971 had very high urban growth during 1971-81. During that decade, Orissa had a decadal urban growth of 68 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 61 per cent, Haryana 60 per cent, Rajasthan 59 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 56 per cent and Bihar 55 per cent. On the other hand, the states at higher levels of urbanisation such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Gujarat and Punjab had relatively lesser growth rates of urban population. During 1981-91, however, the picture is somewhat confusing. While Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka, Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra (the more urbanised states) had relatively lesser rate of urban growth, states like Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (the less urbanised states) had also lesser growth rate of urban population. This is a very incongruous situation and reasons for this need to be investigated. It also looks as if both Tamil Nadu and West Bengal's urban growth has stagnated as they had very low rates of urban growth both during 1971-81 and 1981-91.

TABLE 3: LEVEL OF URBANIZATION AND RURAL-URBAN DECENNIAL GROWTH RATES, INDIA, STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES

| <i>India/State/Union Territory</i> | <i>Urban Pop. as % of total pop. 1991</i> | <i>Decennial growth rate of population (percent), 1981-1991</i> |              |              |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--------------|--------------|
|                                    |   | <i>Total</i>  | <i>Rural</i> | <i>Urban</i> |
| (1)                                | (2)                                       | (3)   | (4)          | (5)          |
| INDIA                              | 25.72                                     | 23.56   | 19.71        | 36.19        |
| Andhra Pradesh                     | 26.84                                     | 23.91   | 18.21        | 42.64        |
| Arunachal Pradesh                  | 17.71                                     | 35.86   | 77.64        | 157.98       |
| Assam                              | 11.08                                     | 73.58   | 71.93        | 38.63        |
| Bihar                              | 13.17                                     | 73.49   | 77.51        | 30.39        |
| Goa                                | 41.07                                     | 15.96   | 0.67         | 48.53        |
| Gujarat                            | 34.40                                     | 70.80   | 15.08        | 33.60        |
| Haryana                            | 24.79                                     | 76.77   | 71.57        | 43.07        |
| Himachal Pradesh                   | 8.70                                      | 19.30   | 17.99        | 36.46        |
| Jammu & Kashmir                    | 23.83                                     | 78.97   | 74.38        | 45.94        |
| Karnataka                          | 30.91                                     | 70.66   | 17.23        | 79.09        |
| Kerala                             | 26.44                                     | 14.06   | 3.26         | 60.89        |
| Madhya Pradesh                     | 23.21                                     | 76.75   | 77.11        | 54.98        |
| Maharashtra                        | 38.73                                     | 75.43   | 18.30        | 38.66        |
| Manipur                            | 27.69                                     | 78.56   | 26.34        | 34.73        |
| Mizhalava                          | 18.69                                     | 31.80   | 30.80        | 36.36        |
| Mizoram                            | 46.20                                     | 38.98   | -0.74        | 160.77       |
| Nagaland                           | 17.78                                     | 56.86   | 53.58        | 74.74        |
| Orissa                             | 13.43                                     | 19.50   | 17.28        | 36.08        |
| Punjab                             | 29.72                                     | 70.76   | 16.87        | 29.11        |
| Rajasthan                          | 77.88                                     | 78.07   | 75.10        | 39.24        |
| Sikkim                             | 0.17                                      | 78.17   | 38.91        | -77.60       |
| Tamil Nadu                         | 34.70                                     | 14.94   | 12.80        | 19.28        |
| Tripura                            | 15.76                                     | 33.60   | 77.77        | 85.75        |
| Uttar Pradesh                      | 19.89                                     | 75.41   | 77.44        | 38.97        |
| West Bengal                        | 27.39                                     | 24.55   | 22.99        | 28.90        |
| <i>Union Territory</i>             |   |   |              |              |
| A & N Islands                      | 26.80                                     | 47.88   | 46.87        | 50.72        |
| Chandigarh                         | 89.69                                     | 41.88   | 129.69       | 35.90        |
| Dadra and Nagar Haveli             | 8.47                                      | 33.49   | 30.9         | 69.51        |
| Daman & Diu                        | 46.86                                     | 28.43   | 2.7.89       | 63.79        |
| Delhi                              | 89.93                                     | 50.64   | 108.67       | 46.10        |
| Lakshadweep                        | 56.29                                     | 28.40   | 4.50         | 56.51        |
| Pondicherry                        | 64.05                                     | 33.51   | 0.58         | 63.56        |

The western region consisting of Maharashtra and Gujarat which constitutes an extended industrial belt is the most urbanised region of India. Together, these two states account for more than one-fifth of the urban population of India while they had only 14 per cent of India's total population. The southern states together account for 27 per cent of country's urban population as against 23 per cent of total population. The eastern region comprising Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tripura and all the north-eastern states contributed less than 18 per cent of India's urban population as against 26 per cent of total population. The Northern and Central zones also contributed more to the total population and less to the urban population of the country. The areas around metropolitan and big cities have more concentration of urban population in each of these regions. A glaring example is Calcutta which lies in the least urbanised eastern region but was the largest city of India till 1981. If primate cities like Bombay and Calcutta are excluded, the level of urbanisation would drop down to

27 per cent in Maharashtra and 13.5 per cent in West Bengal. Thus, a striking feature of the urban process in India is the considerable inter-regional and intra-regional variation. There are vast areas in the country which are deprived of urban settlements leading to extremely low levels of urbanisation of 5 to 10 per cent in these regions.

Prima facie, a slowing down of the tempo of urbanisation should have resulted in a decrease in the growth rate of our bigger cities. This is not the case, however. A city is defined by census as a town or an urban agglomeration which has a population of one lakh or more. Excluding Jammu & Kashmir, where census was not taken, there were 300 cities in 1991 with a population of 140 million. The remaining 33% towns of India (which had a population of less than one lakh each) together had a population of 76 million only. That is, the 300 cities accounted for about two-thirds of India's urban population while the 33% smaller towns had only one-third of India's urban population. What a sharp contrast it is! About 11 per cent of the urban population lived in relatively big towns numbering 345 which had population ranging from 50,000 to less than a lakh. Thus, less than one-fourth of our urban population lived in 3051 small towns. This indicates that the urban population is highly concentrated in bigger towns and cities (Table 4).

TABLE 4: NUMBER OF URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS/TOWNS AND THEIR POPULATION BY SIZE-CLASS, INDIA\*, 1991

| <i>Class (Population Size)</i> | <i>No. of UAs/Towns</i> | <i>Population in 000's</i> | <i>Urban Population as % of total urban population</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| (1)                            | (2)                     | (3)                        | (4)  |
| Class I<br>(100,000 & above)   | 300                     | 139,730                    | 64.89  |
| (a) MI (100,000-199,999)       | 167                     | 22,939                     | 10.65  |
| (b) M 2 (200,000-299,999)      | 40                      | 9,607                      | 4.46   |
| (c) M 3 (300,000-499,999)      | 40                      | 15,586                     | 7.24   |
| (d) M 4 (500,000-999,999)      | 30                      | 20,937                     | 9.72   |
| (e) M 5 (1,000,000 & above)    | 23                      | 70,661                     | 32.81  |
| (I) 1,000,000-1,999,999        | 14                      | 17,176                     | 7.98   |
| (ii) 2,000,000 -4,999,999      | 5                       | 16,261                     | 7.55   |
| (iii) 5,000,000 & above        | 4                       | 37,225                     | 17.29  |
| Class n (50,000-99,999)        | 345                     | 23,597                     | 10.96  |
| Class IE (20,000-49,999)       | 947                     | 28,712                     | 13.33  |
| Class IV (10,000-19,999)       | 1,167                   | 16,998                     | 7.89   |
| Class V (5,000-9,999)          | 740                     | 5,644                      | 2.62   |
| Class VI (Less than 5000)      | 197                     | 657                        | 0.31   |
| All Classes                    | 3,6%                    | 215,338                    | 100.00   |

\* Excludes Jammu & Kashmir where 1991 Census has not been held.

Even among the 300 cities, a majority of the population lived in 23 metropolitan areas having a population of one million or more. One-third of India's urban population and a little more than one-half of the population of our 300 cities lived in these 23 metropolitan areas (Table 4). Till 1981, the number of such metropolitan areas was 12 only but in 1991, their number had doubled to 23. In 1901, there was only one million plus city in India, namely, Calcutta. The number of million plus cities had remained at two between 1921-41. But after independence, the numbers of these metropolitan cities have been going up every decade, from 5 in 1951 to 7 in 1961, 9 in 1971, 12 in 1981 and 23 in 1991. The last decade has shown a very phenomenal increase in their numbers. The percentage of population living in these metropolitan cities to the total urban population of India has been increasing in every decade, having gone up from 18.8 in 1951 to 32.8 in 1991. The increase has, however, been very sharp during the last decade. Over a period of 30 years between 1951-81, the urban population in these big cities had gone up by 30 million only but during last 10 years alone, the increase was of the order of 28.5 million. During thirty years between 1951-81, the percentage of urban population living in these big cities had gone up by 7.6 percentage points while during the last ten years, the increase was of the order of 6.1 points. That is, while the average annual gain in the percentage of population in big cities between 1951-81 was 0.25 per cent only, the corresponding annual gain in last 10 years was 0.6 per cent. Again, during 1951-81, the decadal percentage increase of population in these cities was between 51 to 54 per cent in each decade but in the last decade, the percentage increase was of the order of 68 per cent. All these indicators point towards the increasing concentration of urban population in big cities over the last 10 years.

Among the 23 big cities of India, Bombay is the largest with a population of 12.6 million, and the smallest being Ludhiana with a population of 1.0 million. Till 1981, the twelve big cities, in descending order of population were: Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Pune, Kanpur, Nagpur, Jaipur and Lucknow. All these twelve cities had a population of more than 15 lakhs each in 1991, while in 1981 only 9 cities had more than 15 lakh people in each of them. In 1981, no Indian city had a population of more than 10 million, but in 1991, two cities, namely, Bombay and Calcutta, qualified for this distinction. The eleven cities which have newly emerged as big cities having more than 10 lakh population are Surat, Kochi, Coimbatore, Vadodra, Indore, Patna, Madurai, Bhopal, Visakhapatnam, Varanasi and Ludhiana. As already mentioned, these 23 cities contain one-third of India's urban population, but it is also worth noting that one out of every twelve persons in India lives in these cities. In 1981, these big cities contained a little more than one-fourth of India's urban population while one out of sixteen persons lived in these cities. Thus, it is not only that our urban population is being highly concentrated in our cities of population one lakh or more but the more disturbing fact is that the urban population is getting more and more gravitated towards the bigger metropolitan cities. Within the 23 big cities also, the four mega cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras, which have more than five million population severally, have a much greater gravitational pull. While only half the population of 300 cities lived in 23 big cities, more than 50 per cent of the population of the 23 big cities lived in four mega-cities alone. Thus, more than one-fourth of the population of all the 300 cities was concentrated in these four mega cities making these cities

very congested, subject to environmental pollution and creating serious problems of management and provision of infrastructure. As per U.N. Urban Agglomeration Chart of 1990, there were 12 cities in the world with a population of 10 million or more. Two of these 12 world cities, viz Bombay and Calcutta were in India. These mega cities are having dualistic social and economic systems wherein one-half of the population lives in relative affluence with the other half living in slums in sub-human housing conditions, thereby exposing our social and political fabric to frequent violent tensions.

Taking 1951 as the base, we find that Delhi has grown six times in the last forty years while Bombay grew more than four-fold, Madras three and a half times and Calcutta more than doubled itself. Taking 1951 as 100, the indices of Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1991 were 583, 424, 234 and 348 respectively. The growth of Calcutta has been considerably muted, partly because of its heavy population base and partly due to the near stagnant industrial growth in that area. In fact, Calcutta had been termed as a 'dying city' during the decade.

Apart from these four mega cities, the other 19 metropolitan cities had also a varying growth pattern during 1951-91. Eight of them had grown five-fold or more. Bhopal has increased more than ten-fold, Visakhapatnam 9.7 fold, Ludhiana 6.6 fold, Kochi and Surat 6.4 fold, Vadodra 5.3 fold and Jaipur 5 fold. Out of the remaining eleven metropolitan cities, Varanasi (2.8 fold), Madurai (2.9 fold) and Kanpur (3.0 fold) had the lowest increase. It can easily be seen from these figures that it is either the state headquarters or the bigger industrial towns which have grown more rapidly than others. It is further noticed that most of the other industrial centres are also coming up only on the periphery of these 23 metropolitan areas. The case of Delhi clearly illustrates this fact. Around Delhi, big industrial cities like Faridabad, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Sonapat, Noida, Gurgaon etc., are coming up very fast. There has been a phenomenal growth in areas beyond Greater Bombay Municipal Corporation. Similar is the case with other mega cities. The growth of these mega cities and the areas around them is largely due to the inflow of migrants from rural areas in search of employment. In other words, our larger cities are experiencing abnormal growth due to the actual and perceived employment opportunities available in these cities, while the relatively smaller cities are not growing as fast due to less employment opportunities. The reasons why our small towns are not growing fast is that they lack the necessary economic infrastructure to provide employment opportunities to the migrants from rural areas. The smaller towns are, in fact, not attractive enough for the educated unemployed also who yearn for the glittering lights of the metros. The service sectors of these small towns are not well developed and do not provide much employment opportunities to the increasing hordes of the educated unemployed.

The increasing concentration of urban population in the mega cities is having a serious fall-out. The major problem is that of provision of suitable housing facilities, drinking water, electricity, health infrastructure, sanitation facilities, roads and transport facilities. Roughly half of the population in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta lives in slums. This figure is likely to go up sharply by the year 2000 as the population of these cities goes up further leading to growing gross social and economic inequalities. Deprived of the modern facilities of urban life, the population living in slums are being de-humanised; They become aggressive and they are prone to indulge in violence and other social and economic crimes. They constitute

the 'have-nots'. The distinction between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' is more glaring in the large urban metres than in the smaller cities/towns or rural areas and as such, they are likely to breed contempt for the established socio-political structure. As such, they are a constant threat to the social polity.

Apart from the deprivation suffered by half the population of these cities, the high concentration of population in these cities had made them highly polluted. As per recent estimates, Delhi is now the most polluted city of the world. People living in Delhi are now familiar with the thick heavy layer of smoke in the atmosphere in the evenings, particularly in winter. The respiratory diseases are becoming very common and intractable in Delhi due to the heavily polluted atmosphere of the city. The illegal encroachment of public lands, foot paths and even roads by way-side workshops, vegetable and fruit sellers, and the parking of motor vehicles on roads in more congested areas of Delhi have led to very serious traffic congestions adding to the air pollution by smoke emitted from motor vehicles and also resulted in a severe problem of noise pollution. Living in such polluted atmosphere has become a serious health hazard. The Population Crisis Committee, Washington had made a study of the living conditions in world's 100 large cities in 1989. The Committee had developed ten indicators each of which was given a score ranging from 1 to 10. These indicators included (1) Public safety, (2) Food costs, (3) Living space, (4) Housing standard, (5) Communications, (6) Education, (7) Public Health, (8) Noise levels, (9) Traffic flow and (10) clean air. According to the Score Chart, the Indian cities were in a very bad shape. Of the 9 Indian cities figuring in world's 100 largest cities, Ahmedabad topped with a score of 43 only, followed by Madras (42), Hyderabad (39), Bangalore (38), Delhi (36), Bombay (35), Calcutta (34), Pune (34) and Kanpur (33). The quality of urban life in Indian mega cities is quite poor and any improvement in future depends largely on the success of curbing population growth in India.

The decongestion of the mega cities deserves urgent attention now. But this can be achieved only by more pragmatic, decentralised and de-controlled model of economic development which could lead to dispersal of industries to the non-city urban areas. Decentralisation of economic decision-making process is of equally paramount importance so that these cities are not conceived as the sole engines of economic and social development. We need to have a pattern of economic growth which is more reminiscent of the development in Punjab—more diversified, more dispersed, more decentralised and more equitable. Punjab had the lowest level of concentration of urban population among those eight major states whose level of urbanisation was more than the All India average. Punjab had an average of 50,000 population per town/urban agglomeration while West Bengal had an average of 116,000, Maharashtra 105,000, Andhra Pradesh 84,000, Tamil Nadu 73,000, Kerala, 70,000, Gujarat 63,000 and Karnataka 55,000, the All India average being 58,000 (Table 5). The basic strength of Punjab's growth has been the rise in agricultural productivity and the resultant increase in farm incomes, which, in turn, have led to development of small and medium industries throughout the state in small and medium sized towns.

If the existing spatial pattern of urbanisation is allowed to continue, urban growth would further get concentrated in the areas and cities which are already bursting to the seams and which may not be able to support such large urban population with a reasonable level of urban amenities like housing, sanitation, sewerage, water supply, transportation and health facilities. To provide a reasonable level of amenities, it

TABLE 5 : CONCENTRATION OF URBAN POPULATION PER TOWN / U.A., INDIA AND 15 MAJOR STATES-1991

| <i>Rank in 1991</i> | <i>India/State</i> | <i>Level of urbanisation</i> | <i>No. of UAs/Towns</i> | <i>Total urban Population (in '000)</i> | <i>Avg. pop. per UA/TOWN (in '000).</i> |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|
| (1)                 | (2)                | (3)                          | (4)                     | (5)                                     | (6)                                     |
| 1                   | Maharashtra        | 38.73                        | 290                     | 30496                                   | 105                                     |
| 2                   | Gujarat            | 34.40                        | 225                     | 14164                                   | 63                                      |
| 3                   | Tamil Nadu         | 34.20                        | 260                     | 19027                                   | 73                                      |
| 4                   | Karnataka          | 30.91                        | 254                     | 13851                                   | 55                                      |
| 5                   | Punjab             | 29.72                        | 120                     | 6001                                    | 50                                      |
| 6                   | West Bengal        | 27.39                        | 160                     | 18622                                   | 116                                     |
| 7                   | Andhra Pradesh     | 26.84                        | 213                     | 17813                                   | 84                                      |
| 8                   | Kerala             | 26.44                        | 109                     | 7676                                    | 70                                      |
|                     | India              | 25.72                        | 3696                    | 215338                                  | 58                                      |
| 9                   | Haryana            | 24.79                        | 90                      | 4045                                    | 45                                      |
| 10                  | Madhya Pradesh     | 23.21                        | 433                     | 15348                                   | 35                                      |
| 11                  | Rajasthan          | 22.88                        | 215                     | 10040                                   | 47                                      |
| 12                  | Uttar Pradesh      | 19.80                        | 707                     | 27653                                   | 39                                      |
| 13                  | Orissa             | 13.43                        | 119                     | 4232                                    | 36                                      |
| 14                  | Bihar              | 13.17                        | 211                     | 11369                                   | 54                                      |
| 15                  | Assam              | 11.08                        | 87                      | 2471                                    | 28                                      |

\* Excludes Jammu & Kashmir where 1991 Census has not been held

would require a massive investment of Rs. 3000 to 3500 crores per annum (as estimated by National Commission on Urbanisation) in infrastructure in only selected cities. On the other hand, there are large areas in the eastern region, north-eastern region, western Rajasthan, northern Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh which are rich in resources and have a development potential but which do not have an urban infrastructure. These are the areas where resources are available for supporting a much higher level of urbanisation but due to lack of urbanisation, these areas are economically backward and underdeveloped.

It must also be noted that the areas with low levels of urbanisation are generally those areas which are agriculturally backward. Therefore, one of the basic thrusts of policy should be massive investments in agricultural inputs in such areas, which, in turn, would lead to more balanced economic growth and also lead to balanced urbanisation.