

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH URBANIZATION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The economies of the Third World countries are characterised by existence of modern and traditional or spatially speaking, urban and rural sectors with the predominance of the rural sector. A major portion of the GDP of these countries is contributed by agriculture in the rural areas. In addition, agriculture produces food and raw materials for urban and urban based manufacturing sector. Bulk of labour force comes from the rural areas. The initial investible surplus that subsequently multiplies in urban modern sector also originates from the rural areas generated mainly in agriculture. Ideally then urban and rural sectors could have been considered both operationally and conceptually as a continuum characterised by both way traffic. But unfortunately, the continuum at empirical level is unidimensional; the approach to development is segregated.

Historically, the urban sector remained the double beneficiary of development process—one benefit reinforcing the other. In the first place, there has been a systemic bias in development planning in favour of the urban sector.<sup>1</sup> Of the two planning approaches,<sup>2</sup>

1. Michael Lipton, *Why Poor People Stay Poor, A Study in Urban Bias in World Development*. (London: Tamole Smith Ltd., 1977), pp. 146-67; M. Alamgir, "Some Analysis of Distribution of Income, Consumption, Savings and Poverty in Bangladesh," *Bangladesh Development Studies*, (Vol. II No. 4, Oct. 1974) pp. 337-818.; and De Vylder, 'Urban Bias in Development: Bangladesh' *Journal of Social Studies* (No. 4, July 1979), pp. 6-14.
2. L.K. Sen, et. al. *Planning Rural Growth Centes for Integrated Area Development: A Study in Miryalguder Taluka* (Hyderabad: National Institute of Community Development, 1971), p. 1.

normally the functional planning is practised in developing countries and spatial planning remains neglected. In the process, the urban sector, though smaller in physical proportion and in importance to the national economy, ends up being the dominant beneficiary of development process and distribution of wealth, goods and services. Secondly, since infrastructural facilities and supporting services are concentrated in the few urban centres<sup>3</sup>, whatever potential investible surplus is there in the country tends to concentrate in those centres, the bulk of the countryside remaining capital-starved. This in turn, results in polarisation in the process of urbanisation. And this polarisation is reflected not only in the dichotomy in growth pattern of urban and rural sectors but also in inter-urban growth process. Only few urban centres grow disproportionately, of course, in a relative sense, at the cost of the smaller ones which languish in lack of requisite organic growth.

Because of this dichotomous growth pattern, urban development and rural development recognized as contending concepts. In recent development literature<sup>4</sup>, however, and altogether different view on urbanization has been advocated. An appropriate urbanization policy may be a boon to rural development and for that matter, overall development of the national economy.

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3. De Vylder, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

4. Brutzkus "Centralized Vs Decentralized Patterns of Urbanization in Developing Countries An Attempt to Elicidate a Guide Line Principle," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* (Vol. 28, No. 4, July, 1975. pp. 663-652.; C.S. Chandrasekher, "Indias' Urban Future," *Economic Times* (Bombay & New Delhi: 13th and 14th Sept., 1977.; B.F. Hoselitz, "Urbanization and Economic Growth in Asia," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* (Vol. 6, 1957. pp. 42-54.; D.A. Rondinelli and K. Ruddle, "Urban Functions in Rural Development Analysis of Intergrated Spatial Development Policy" Prepared for Urban Development Technical Assistance Bureau (Washington D.C.: Agency for International Development.; and Robert A. Hackenbug, "New Patterns of Urbanization in South East Asia: An Assessment," *Population and Development*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Sept. 1980).



This paper intends to reconcile the contending concept taking Bangladesh as a case. The paper argues that decentralisation of appropriately designed urban centres in an integrated approach contributes to rural development rather than hindering it. Section 2 finds out workable definition of the concepts of development and urbanization. Sections 3 and 4 review the past rural development and past urbanization patterns in Bangladesh. Brief commentary on the proposed urbanization pattern in the Second Five-Year Plan (1980-85) is made in Section 5. Finally some recommendations are made in Section 6.

## 2. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

### 2.1 Development

It is very difficult to define what development actually is and there is no universally acceptable definition either. The concept of development obtaining in the advanced industrialized countries is markedly different from that in the developing countries. Therefore, criteria of development vary from society to society. A realistic way of defining it would be to take into account the socio-cultural perspectives of the country concerned.

The social organizations, cultural institutions, and economic state of the nation are matters of great concern in the development planning of a transitional society like Bangladesh. To us, development should no longer be exclusively concerned with economic growth, rather it would involve the totality of societal growth based on the awareness of environments in which we live and in which lie all our resources. Whatever development strategy we adopt, it must conform to the total society's needs, and the process of conceptualization and implementation must also be acceptable to the people. According to modernizationists, in the process of development "the nations or people come to participate in the structural elaboration of an existing form or state of being".<sup>5</sup> This assumes that the structural elaboration or specificities of the existing form is always devoted to the welfare of majority. But this may not always

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5. Quoted from Tim Luke "The Meaning of Development: Theory and Doctrine Since 1945", *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 2, (Sept. 1981) p. 9.

be true, particularly for Bangladesh. In the name of development many structural elaborations have taken place in Bangladesh in the last decade but they certainly did not result in development in real sense.

The United Nations defined development as "growth plus change; change, in turn, being social and cultural as well as economic, qualitative, as well as quantitative."<sup>6</sup> Development is seen not only as a unidimensional economic growth but also commensurate with sociocultural change. While economic growth is an essential precondition for development, this process can and must be facilitated by changes in the societal perceptions of the people themselves.

Friedmann appears to have operationalised the concept "development" when he defines development as increases in (1) the autonomous role of various forces in society; (2) the increase in the levels of living of the population (a) an increase in social integration through peoples participation; (4) an increase in modernization, specially by scientific innovation; and (5) in the cincrease in spatial interaction.<sup>7</sup>

The priority of these goals are also important. For Bangladesh, the highest priority should be placed on the economic integration and interaction among the productive forces in the society in both functional and spatial dimension. The concept of integrated approach in development planning is gaining increasing importance in recent years because of the inter-relatedness in the development activities in agriculture, industry, education, health and other services. This is functional integration. Spatial integration is another dimension of integrated development approach without which functional integration is meaningless.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Quoted from Udo Ernst Simons, "Enviornmental Disruption: Economic Growth," *Ekistecs*, Vol. 37, No. 218, (Jan, 1974) p. 46.
  7. John Friedmann, *Urbanization, Planning and National Development* (London: Sage Publication, 1973) p.p. 22-23
  8. L.K. Sen, et. al., op. cit., pp. 1-13. and also R. Islam "Spatial Development: its Need" in N. Islam (ed.) *Eassays on Urbanization. Urban Planning and Development.* (Dacca: Centre for Urban Studies University of Dacca) 1980.



The spatial integration of activities depends on the interaction among the various activities in terms of their specific location. Not only that, spatial nature of functional integration or the locational behaviour of resources influence the total economic activities. There are many other factors which influence the actual location of a particular function in relation to other functions. These factors may be identified as existing level of development, demand and supply of a specific function, accessibility of functions in terms of transportation, time and distance of travel, income level of the people and the cost of obtaining these functions. This is where we turn to the second concept of our paper: urbanization.

## 2.2 Urbanization

The word urbanization has been derived from its latin root 'Urbs' meaning city. 'Urban', an adjective, refers to a particular place where economic concentration of non-agricultural activities and social concentration of particular type of values, behaviour, organization and institutions are present. An urban place may also have other indicators like a minimum number of population and density, compactness of physical structures or proportion of builtup areas, shape and forms etc.<sup>9</sup>

Urbanization process may take place in two distinct ways: one, by movement of people to an urban place, by changing their residence from rural areas to the urban area, with corresponding changes of behaviour in terms of activities and culture; two, by increase in the number of towns and cities.<sup>10</sup>

Urbanization process starts only after certain geographical and socio-economic conditions of a country or society are met.<sup>11</sup> The process does not occur in a 'folk society', which is actually a pre-urban society. Pre-urban societies are characterized by an illiterate population consisting of self sufficient homogeneous groups

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9. H. Carter, *Study of Urban Geography*, 2nd edn., (London: Edward Arnold, 1976) pp. 18-22.
  10. N. Islam, (ed). *Essays on Urbanization, Urban Planning and Development* (Dacca: Centre for Urban Studies, 1980), p. 3.
  11. N. Begum, "Urbanization: Concept, Factors and Characteristics " in N. Islam (ed.) *Ibid.*, pp. 5-8.

devoted to their full efforts in the production of food. Under such condition there is no (social) distinction or specialization of labour. Later, through gradual advances in technology and organizational structure the society graduates to the second level of generation, that is, the "civilized" pre-industrial or 'feudal' society. This society is characterized by surplus of food, division of labour and existence of feudal elites. World's first cities were developed in this second type of societies though these cities were completely parasitic in nature.

With the industrial revolution since the 1750s and onwards a dramatic change took place in the urbanization process, as the 'pull' factors of industrialized cities contributed to the urbanization process by precipitating rural-to-urban migration. Modern urban growth is the continuation of that process through large scale migration from rural areas, attracted by a wide variety of tertiary sector economy and job diversity in the city areas.<sup>12</sup>

The pattern of contemporary urbanization in the developing countries differs substantially from those of Euro-American industrial urbanization. Occupational mobility away from agriculture and spatial migration from rural to urban areas provided an alternative life opportunity for surplus rural population during the European transition. But in the developing countries rural migrants create more problem in comparison with Euro-American situation, because demands for non-agricultural occupation in the city areas exceed the supply of work facilities. The main reason for this difference is the "rural push" caused by mass poverty in the rural areas which continuously pressurise people to move out into cities, thereby contributing to the growth of urban informal sectors in relatively large cities.<sup>13</sup> As the 'pull' factors are mainly confined to large metropolitan areas the rapid growth also takes place in these cities instead of small and medium sized towns. This is how the primate cities emerged in most of the underdeveloped countries.

This scenario reinforces our earlier premises that urbanization as such is an isolated fashion in the sea of poverty throughout the

12. Davis, "The Urbanization of Human Population," *Scientific American*, Vol. 213. No. 3, (Sept. 1965), pp. 41-50.

13. R.A. Hackenberg, op. cit., p. 396.



country does not help reduce poverty. Rather it gives rise to the evils of unplanned city growth. This also clearly indicates that the pattern of urbanization in a developing country like Bangladesh should be different, rather non-conventional. Thus, urbanization in the rural development context not only refers to an occupational mobility of the people away from agricultural pursuits in the local level, but also the creation of an infrastructural setting with guaranteed provisions for minimum required services.

What should then be the scope of urbanization in Bangladesh? Obviously it is not to be mere expansion of existing large cities and not the increase in the number of people living in metropolitan areas. The desired urbanization process should not involve large scale shifting of residence. Rather it should incorporate the process of transforming the rural mode of production, settlement pattern, occupation and way of life in such a way that the excess burden on agriculture in the form of disguised unemployment is eased through creation of non-agricultural activities and the infrastructural facilities, inputs and services for boosting up agricultural growth. In other words, growth sensitive areas like thana head quarters, 'bandars' and 'ganjes' (rural commercial centres normally located on the bank of rivers, rivulets and canals), could be developed into mini-urban centres with the minimum infrastructural facilities like roads and water communication, electricity, marketing facilities, development and service-giving agencies and above all, security.

The idea that rapid and balanced development of a country can be achieved through the decentralization<sup>14</sup> of urban facilities or through the "defuse urbanization" process is both a new and challenging concept.

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14. Many authors have stressed the need for a decentralised Policy in development planning. Nazrul Islam "Regional Landuse Planning and Development," *The Business Review* Vol. 1, No. 1, (Dec., 1972) pp. 114-124; Muhammad Yunus, "Planning in Bangladesh: Formate, Technique and Brioriteg," *Political Economy*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1974) pp. 99-108.; Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development, *Habitat: National Report 1976*; Raihan Sharif, "Planning Issues, Aiming Social Justice," *The Bangladesh Times*, July 31, 1977; Rehman Sobhan, "The Political Economy

Growth centre notion provides a methodology for a balanced programme of rural development.<sup>15</sup> Balance in economic development comes only when the diffusion of economic activities and opportunities are present. Diffusion of growth centres as well as economic activities may take place when the following conditions are fulfilled.<sup>16</sup>

- (i) Rapid rate of urbanization.
- (ii) Increasing services, facilities and employment opportunities so that unemployed surplus labour force can be absorbed.
- (iii) Conversion of agricultural activities from subsistence level to cash crop farming.
- (iv) Industrial activity based on local resources and labourer which is able to function profitably without subsidy.
- (v) Multiplier effects on economy and the existence of external economies which will support other industrial activities.
- (vi) People's participation in both the planning and implementation process.

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of Regional Development. The Asian Experience," *Asian Affairs*, Vol. III, No. 4, (Dec., 1981), pp. 373-407.; Ruquiyah Islam, Spatial and Temporal Patterns of Development in Dacca District," Unpublished Masters thesis, Department of Geography, University of Dacca. 1978.

15. The concept of "Growth Centre" have steadily been accumulating a large literature since 1955, when France economist Perroux wrote an article entitled, "Economic Space and Functional Poles of Growth". Subsequently the growth centre notion was modified by regional and Economic Planners. For details see D.F. Darwent, "Growth Poles and Growth Centres in Regional Planning. A Review", in John Friedmann and William Alonso, eds. *Regional Policy: Readings in Theory and Applications* (MIT, 1975), pp. 539-565.; N. M. Hansen, "Criteria for a Growth Centre Policy" in J. Friedmann & W. Alonso eds. *ibid.*, pp. 566-587.; L.K. Sen, et. al. *op. cit.* p. 7.; W. Alonso, "Urban and Regional Imbalances in Economic Development" in Friedmann and Alonso eds. *op. cit.*, pp. 622-635.



Growth centres may not be developed in all regions equally. It depends on the characteristics of the region. We have to consider some important issues, such as: (a) the mechanism by which urban growth or growth centre develops; (b) the meaning of diffusion of economic growth from a central place to its surrounding rural areas; and (c) the criteria by which a town or service centre will be selected for major capital investment.

Economic growth does not take place in an arbitrary region. It may be useful for administrative purpose. To develop growth centre we need a scientifically delineated set of boundaries in a region with well defined functional community and resource base. The next step is to locate the place with a particular type of function, desired or required by that community or region. A small population can support only the minimum services needed for day to day living. On the other hand, a large population can support specialized services. More demands for specialized services can be generated by improving transport network, setting various infrastructural base, such as health centre, school-colleges, industries etc. The centre where these facilities are available will emerge gradually as a nucleus of the surrounding areas and offer progressively more specialized services depending on the demand for a specific function and also the time and cost of travel.<sup>17</sup> But a small village will remain with minimum facilities. Thus, a hierarchy of settlement will emerge on the continuum of a service specialisation, with the village at one end and a metropolitan town on the other. This whole range of settlement can be arranged according to the specialization of functions with their own area of influence. Among this continuum of settlements which are central or nuclei to the hinterland are called growth centres. It becomes evident that the concept of urbanization as a strategy for development in a country like Bangladesh has to be used in a flexible but functional sense. Urbanization, therefore, would not be an end in itself but a platform of development.

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- 16 S.W.P. Bulankulame, "The Need for Growth Centres in Regional Development Planning—with Special Reference to Sri Lanka," Paper presented in Seminar on *Small and Medium Sized Towns in Regional Development*, organized by the Quaker International Affairs Programme in South Asia (9-16 April, 1978, Kathmundu, Nepal).
17. L.K. Sen, et. al., op. cit.

### 3 PAST RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

As 90% of the total population live in 65000 villages scattered all over the country, the policy makers have been concerned with rural people and accordingly different action programmes were taken for rural development. After the partition of India in 1947 many steps were taken for both agriculture and rural development. In 1955, the V-AID (Village Agricultural and Industrial Development) programme was launched with the primary objective of stimulating self-help and co-operative effort among the villagers. In 1962-63 the 'Rural Works Programme' emphasised infrastructure development mainly through construction of roads, embankments, irrigation and drainage channels and creation of more employment opportunity for the rural people.

But none of the programmes would be considered as success story. The first programme failed due to lack of committed development workers interested in genuine development work. The second programme faltered owing to misappropriation of funds and inefficient management by the political elements.<sup>18</sup>

The third attempt at a rural development programme introduced in the decade of 1960s with the help of the Pakistan Academy for Rural Development, was a new type of co-operative developed in Comilla for the improvement of the rural economy and agricultural development. The objectives were: (i) to increase output, income and employment; (ii) to promote capital accumulation; and (iii) to promote social and economic equity. The programme was gradually expanded to different parts of Comilla and its performance in growth of productivity was commendable.<sup>19</sup>

In the post-independence period, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) modelled after the Comilla co-operative was introduced as a national strategy of rural development. The main plank of the programme consisted of formation of two-tier cooperative system with the Thana Training and Development Centre

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18. M.A. Quasem, "Policy Proposals Towards Rural Development in Bangladesh" *Political Economy*, Vol. 2. No. 1, Conference (1976), p. 525.

19. M.A. Quasem, *Ibid.*, p. 525.



(TTDC) as the central body. Primary co-operatives were formed by the landed peasants who became the beneficiaries of subsidised inputs and credits. But unfortunately, majority of the rural people consisting of small and marginal farmers, landless poor remained outside the purview of the programme. The Krishak Samabaya Samity (KSS-Farmers' Cooperative Association) became the "closed club of Kulaks."<sup>20</sup>

Thus the IRDP as well as other subsequent development programmes like the "Swanirvor" (Self-help) Programme, and the "Gram Sarkar" (Village Government) etc. failed to deliver the desired goods to the rural people. Intra-rural disparity widened, mass destitution ensued and the consequence has been mass of migration of rural people to urban areas in search of job and livelihood. The question is what exactly went wrong?

A number of factors might be held responsible. In the first place, the systemic bias in favour of urban sector resulted in dissipation of resources earmarked for rural areas at urban end. Top-heavy superstructures for rural development were paradoxically established in urban areas. Development officials designated for rural development preferred to stay in the city and 'oversee' rural development process through occasional visits to rural areas only. Secondly, the development agencies located at thana headquarters did not have enough authority and resources to carry out the development programmes. Thirdly, there was profuse mismanagement with the inputs and services for agricultural development, the small and marginal farmers did not have access to these inputs and services. Fourthly, because of stagnation in agriculture and lack of security in the rural areas, significant plight of investible surplus generated in agriculture to urban areas took place.

Thus, the story of rural development in the past has been one of pauperisation of the rural masses where a few urban centres grew.

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20. Steve Jones, "An Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes in Bangladesh," *The Journal of Social Studies*, Vol. 6, (Dec, 1979), pp. 51-92.

#### 4. URBANIZATION PATTERNS IN BANGLADESH

We have argued that urbanization, as such, is not responsible for creating a sharp social and economic differentiation. The evils of urbanization have appeared mainly due to inadequate preparation to meet the demands of urban population and failure to bring about planned urban growth to serve appropriately the needs of rural people. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the pattern, trends in urbanization and its inter-relationship with rural sector of the economy. Only then can we proceed to formulate our policy regarding urbanization as a strategy for rural development.

According to 1947 Census a little over 6 million or 8.9% of the total population of Bangladesh lived in areas called urban.<sup>21</sup> A preliminary report of 1981 Census shows the figure at about 10 percent. Ratio wise Bangladesh is one of the least urbanized countries but if the total urban population is considered in comparison with the other countries, the figure is higher than the national population of some 80 countries of the world in the same year (1974).<sup>22</sup> However, the distributional pattern of urban population and urban centres are quite uneven. Among the 119 (1974) urban centres<sup>23</sup> scattered all over the country, more than half (54%) of the population are concentrated in 6, classified as large cities, having population over one lakh. Second and third categories of towns accommodate 30% and 13% of the urban population respec-

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21. An urban area normally includes places having a Municipality, Town Committee or a Cantonment Board with at least 5,000 persons in a continuous collection of houses where community sense is well developed and other basic utility services are available. These places are generally centres of trade and commerce with a population engaged substantially in non-agricultural activities. With less than 5,000 population some times areas may be treated as 'urban' when other urban characteristics are present. This definition has been consistently used for delimiting urban areas in all census years. For details, see Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh. Census Commission, *Banladesh Population Census 1974, Bulletin, No. 2, (Dacca: 1974)*, p. 53.

22. N. Islam (ed) op. cit., p. 1.



tively while the lowest category numbering 27 towns constitute only 7% of the population. On the other hand, the pattern of spacing of urban centres is not uniform,<sup>24</sup> some areas could not attract many new urban centres while in others more facilities agglomerated.

Growth of urban population in Bangladesh in recent decades is remarkably high. But in earlier decades the growth rate was low and more or less static. Urbanization got a new direction since 1947, when East Pakistan (Bangladesh) along with West Pakistan got a separate entity.

After independence in 1971 a radical change took place in urbanization with 138% increase over 1961 as would be evident from Table-I

**Table I: Growth of Urban Population in Bangladesh**

Year	No. of urban centers	%of urban population	%increase
1901	39	2.43	—
1911	39	2.55	14.96
1921	41	2.61	8.85
1931	48	3.01	22.20
1941	57	3.66	43.90
1951	64	4.34	18.38
1961	78	5.19	45.11
1974	119	8.78	137.57

Source : Rafiqul Hudā Chaudhury, *Urbanization in Bangladesh* (Dacca: Center for Urban Studies, 1980), Table No. 2, p. 4.

Large scale rural urban migration has been considered to be the main factor in urban growth after 1971, while around the decade

23. According to Centre for Urban Studies' calculation based on census data the total number of urban centres in 1974 was 119. But it differs a little from census enumeration. see N. Islam, "Urbanization in Bangladesh: Pattern, Problems and Policies," in N. Islam (ed), *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

of 1950s the main force was immigration of the Muslims from India. Besides, the emergence of new centres of trades and commerce, industries and administration after a new political status in 1947 was also an important factor.<sup>25</sup>

History of urban growth in Bangladesh is more than 2500 years old with an enriched heritage of planned cities. During the British rule quite a number of towns had emerged mainly for collecting and producing of exportable surplus and creating administrative base. These towns were mainly parasitic in nature. As a result, these towns and cities could not play an important role in the socio-economic development of the common people. The urban growth prior to this century and even in the first half of the century may not be considered as urbanization in real sense.

Presently, no more than one third of the country's total area is within the daily influence of the urban centres.<sup>26</sup> It is not very easy to offer services to the remotest and backward areas from a very few centralized cities.

*Urbanization and Agricultural Labour Force:* Theoretically degree of urbanization is related to development positively while proportion of labour force dependent on agricultural activities is negatively correlated. In the case of Bangladesh both the criteria are negatively associated with the development of Bangladesh. For the country as a whole, 55 percent of the total labour force are engaged in agriculture. But this is not the case for all areas equally. It varies substantially from region to region depending on the facilities of secondary and tertiary activities which are mostly confined with urban centers. Similarly, though the Census data shows

24. In 1951, the spacing of urban centres were approaching uniform. But 1951 commercial and industrial activities were expanded and many new towns and urban centres have been formed in an unplanned manner. As a result, in the subsequent censuses (1961 and 1974) the pattern has been found random. See N. Islam, "Spacing of Urban Centres in Bangladesh," *The Oriental Geographer*, Vol. XIX & XX, No. 1 & 2, (1975-76), pp. 68-73.

25. N. Islam (1980), op. cit., p. 74.

26. N. Islam, *Ibid.*, p. 73.



that on the average about 9 percent of the population live in urban areas, sub-division wise it varies from less than 2 percent to about 75 percent which is also quite surprising.<sup>27</sup>

The two criteria, agricultural labour force and degree of urbanization, have been applied in order to find out the areal differentiation in terms of their dominance in Bangladesh. The study<sup>28</sup> reveals a substantial areal variation in the distribution of both the agricultural labour force and urbanized population. In the case of each variable the country has been devised into 5 categories of region on the basis of deviation from the mean value of the respective variables.

On the basis of agricultural labour force the five categories are shown in the table as well as in the map. Category I is the most under developed region as proportion of agricultural labour force is higher (80%) than the other categories of regions. This region consist of 8 remote subdivisions scattered throughout the country and covers 12% of the total area. The region falling into category II

**Table 2: Region on the Basis of Agricultural Labour Force 1974**

Region	% of Ag. Labourforce	Area covered excluding river (in Sq. miles)	% of total area of the country	Nos. of sub-division fall in each category.
I	$\bar{x}+2SD$	6214	12.00	8
II	$\bar{x}+1SD$	25548	51.00	29
III	$\bar{x}-1SD$	15981	30.50	20
IV	$\bar{x}-2SD$	2885	5.00	3
V	$\bar{x}-3SD$	1247	1.50	2

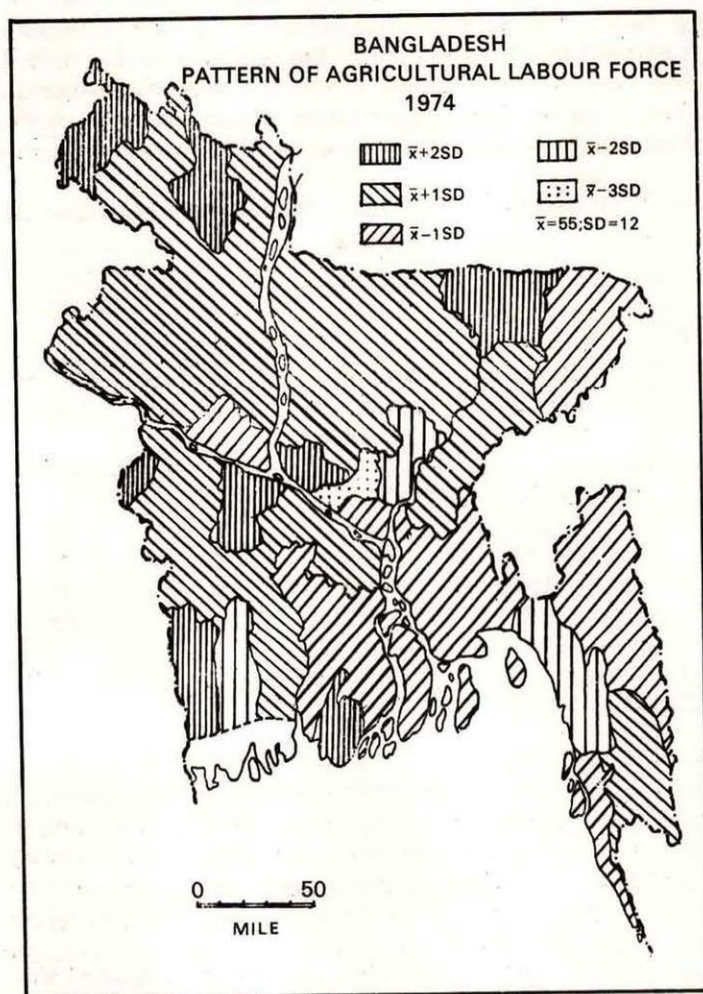
$\bar{x}$  (Mean)=55; SD (deviation from the mean)=12

Source : Fn. 28.

27. Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Census Commission, op. cit., Table-3, pp. 53-95.

28. The study was conducted by the author for a seminar paper based on 1974 census data. The areal unit of the study was

covers 51% of the area with 67% of the agricultural labour force. These areas are economically backward in terms of the dominance of agricultural labour force. The region under category III, IV and V are economically better as they have less proportion of agricultural



labourers. These three categories of region combinedly covers roughly one third of the total area of the country (25 subdivisions out of 62). Detailed breakdown has been given in the Table 2.



The same study also reveals that most the areas of the country are less urbanized than the national average (8.7%). On the basis of intensity of urban population the country has been devised into five categories of regions (Table-3). The first three categories are more urbanized having urban population more than national average. But in terms of the area covered it is very negligible (less than 7 percent of the total area). This region includes only 4 subdivisions, namely Dacca Sadar North & South, Chittagong Sadar and Khulna Sadar. The region under Category IV is moderately urbanized which includes 8 subdivisions and covers 15 percent of the

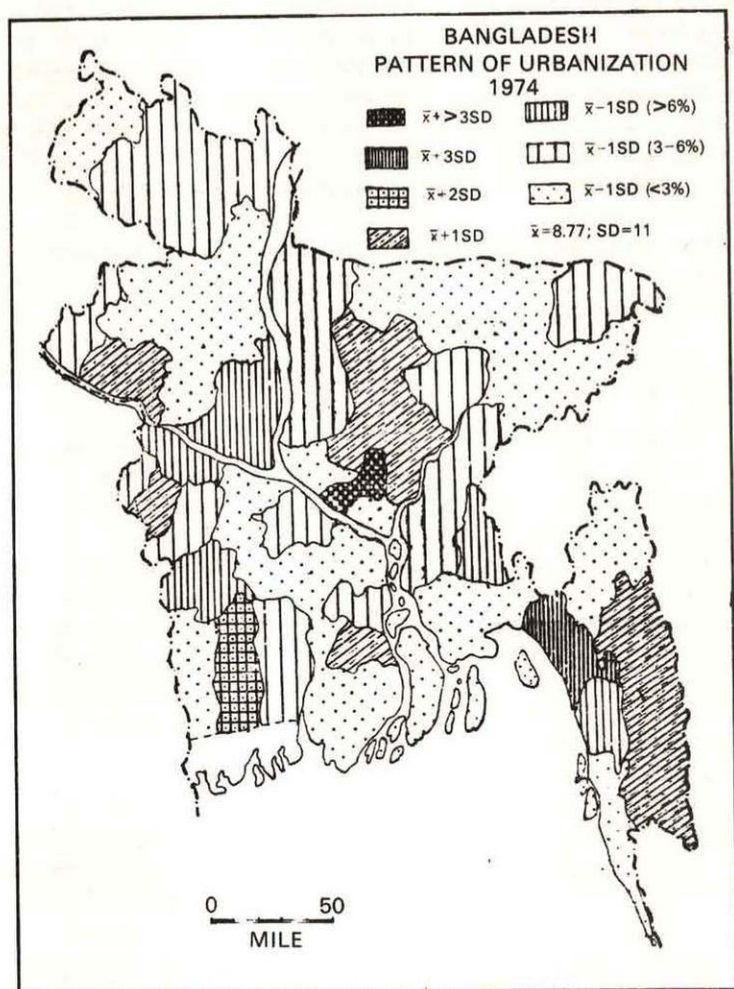
**Table-3: Regions on the Basis of Degree of Urbanization. 1974.**

Region	% of urbanized people by standard deviation	Area covered (in Sq. miles)	% of total area	No. of Sub-division.
I	$\bar{x}$ +above 3SD	1273	1.5	2
II	$\bar{x}$ +3SD	1242	2.0	1
III	$\bar{x}$ +2SD	1684	3.0	1
IV	$\bar{x}$ +1SD	8389	15.0	8
V	$\bar{x}$ -1SD	43010	78.5	50

$\bar{x}$  (Mean)=8.77; SD (deviation from the mean)=11  
Source : Fn. 28.

subdivision. The attempt was made to find out regional variation in the distribution of agricultural labour force and proportion of Urban population. Five categories of region have been identified separately on the basis of their distribution in the country. For identification of regions *Mean Deviation method* has been applied so that each region can achieve a quantitative value. One unit variation from the mean value of the each variable indicates one category of region. For details see N. Islam Nazem. "Regional Economic Development Pattern in Bangladesh" (in Bangla) *UPAKUL*, a biannual Geographical Magazine, Dacca University, Vol. 6, (Jan. 1978) pp. 36-46.

total area. These areas with 9 to 20% urbanized population has adjacent to the more urbanized regions. Category V is a vast region covering about 80% of the total area of the country and includes



10 subdivisions. This region is predominately rural and at least 25 subdivisions of the region has less than 3 percent urbanized people of its total population. It means, these 25 subdivisions are far remote to be served by urban centres.



Areal variations in the levels of urbanization and in the rate of urban growth tend to be related to regional differentials in the economic development. As facilities agglomerate around large cities the Dacca region or the central part of the country is more developed followed by Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. Of all the industries in public sector 44% are located in and around Dacca city while the Rajshahi division, the Northern part of the country have only 7%.<sup>29</sup> Differentiation are also found in the consumption level of electricity. Per capita consumption of electricity in the Northern region is only about 2.6 KWH as against the central region where consumption level is about 29 KWH.<sup>30</sup> From the above discussion it is evident that there is a substantial areal variation in the development pattern of the country. The maps show that less urbanized regions are dominated by more agricultural labour force.

## 5. BRIEF REVIEW OF SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The Second Five-Year Plan (1980-85) envisages that public sector infrastructures and other service facilities will be extended from about 100 locations at present to about 1200 growth centres during the plan period.<sup>31</sup> The growth centres will consist of thana headquarters and big hats and bazars. The main objective of such ambitious programme is to connect all the growth centres within a transport network, provide electricity to the centres, set up agro-based industries along with workshop facilities and to offer the employment facilities nearer to the people with other basic service facilities. Recognising the importance of spatial structure of services and facilities and a balanced distribution of investment the Second Plan attributes the necessity of more balanced socio-economic development of the country. The Plan also emphasised on a complete land use study and physical plans of such growth centres, so that, these locations are capable of accommodating and providing the services economically for which they are to be developed.

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29. Rafiqul Huda Chaudhury, *Urbanization in Bangladesh*, (Dacca: Centre for Urban Studies, 1980), pp. 13-31.

30. R.H. Chaudhury, *Ibid.*, Table 11, p. 30.

31. Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Planning Commission, *The Second Five Year Plan* (Dacca: May, 1980) pp. XIX-1-20.

The programme has been handicapped by various shortcomings. While 1200 Growth centres have been identified and proposed to connect these with transport network and electricity, it is not clearly mentioned that how and where agro-based industries and workshops will be established. On the other hand, no budgetary allocation have been adopted through other sectoral investment portfolios. Moreover a substantial time frame will be required to reach these 1200 growth centres in a viable stage for sustained growth, which have been completely overlooked.

## 6. SOME TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Before making a plan for rural growth centres an objective examination of the realities of rural areas is essential. Conceptually it seems to be an excellent plan for a balanced rural growth, but these arbitrarily selected centres may not help in growth, although, for administrative purposes these units may be useful. It is a fact, that growth does not take place in all locations, and yet its reason is undiscovered to the development scientist. For a spatial structure and a sustained growth throughout the country there is need for the establishment of many intermediary steps which will act as spatial vehicle for accelerated economic development. Successive investment programmes to promote a non agricultural functional base require a hierarchically ordered settlement system with a sizable population. Because, non agricultural activities grow only when spatial interaction takes place. A planner of the Urban Development Directorate suggested the following hierarchy of settlement<sup>32</sup> for an integrated spatial structure as a base for growth centre policy.

It is an important and difficult task to find out the potential growth centres among the 1200 proposed centres already identified. Not only that, where the potential growth centres fit in the above mentioned hierarchy, also has to be determined. To identify a potential growth centre a proper study is required to assess the

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32. A.C. Das, "Planning and Development of Growth Centres-A Major Physical Planning Programme in the Second Five Year Plan," Paper Presented at the Seminar on *Public Works, Physical Planning & Housing 1980-85*, Organized by the Ministry of Public Works and Urban Development of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, 8-9 July, 1980.



**Table 4: Suggested Hierarchy of Settlements**

Type of Hierarchy	Number of Population
Village centres	less than 5,000
Big hats and bazars	5,000—10,000
Thana headquarter with large market centres	10,000—25,000
Maso regional centres (lesser dist. & subdivisional town)	25,000—50,000
Macro regional centres (Major district towns)	50,000—1,00,000
Metropolitan areas and primate cities	1,00,000 and above

Source: fn, 32.

infrastructural facilities available in the existing towns and viability of its expansion, skill and strength of the labour force, existing functions and industries and their linkages with regards to new industrial development, existing size and population of the town and their trends in growth, its geographical position and finally its suitability for a specific function, so that, the growth must be geared to such function. The aim of such study is to identify growth centres carefully for capital investment so that the centres can be developed into effective nodes capable of generating economic growth and diffusing such growth to the surrounding regions for a long period of time.

Once growth centres have been identified it may be necessary to find out which centres should be considered for the development first. It should always be in mind that our resources are limited. On the other hand, priorities should be given to the backward areas. If existing hierarchy of settlements in a region is utilized for formulating development plan, then areas away from the centres be always lag behind. On the basis of potential resources of the backward areas some inducement to growth has to be created on a priority basis. Therefore, success or failure of growth centres deve-

lopment for the backward rural areas depends highly on the idea of selectivity and decentralisation.<sup>33</sup>

Decentralisation policy is neither a strategy nor an approach in the development activities. It is simply a guiding principle, without which spatially balanced development is not possible. The idea of decentralisation originated from spatial imbalance in socio-economic development<sup>34</sup> particularly the growth of backward region which are far away from the centres of economic activities. Decentralisation of economic activities which will reduce urban congestion and regenerate country side must be based on planned programme of urbanization.

Decentralisation does not mean the replacement of centres facilities and activities to the areas away from the centres only. It includes the replacement of total system of decision making and planning at the local level with activities and services. At every stage of decision making, planning and implementation process the people of every level who are affected should be involved. Because, the local people are fully aware of their needs, problems and their probable solution. The supreme objective of decentralisation is an effective use of underutilized resources and more extensive coverage of the population with the benefits of development.

Most of the development economies including Bangladesh stressed on the decentralisation policy to attract private investment in establishing industrial estates and to generate employment opportunity with private economic activities. But most of the governments were unsuccessful due to failure of delegating power to the local level. Usually they talk about decentralisation of power and resources to motivate the people politically. In fact most of them are engaged in managing scarce resources for a variety of administrative functions, to build their party, secure the allegiance of their worker and to mobilize party activities for a popular support.<sup>35</sup>

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33. L.K. Sen, et. al., op. cit., p. 5.

34. Rehman Sobhan, "Political Economy of Regional Development: The Asian Experience" *Asian Affairs* Vol. 3, No. 4, (Dec., 1981) p. 381.

35. Rehman Sobhan, *Ibid.*, pp. 381-84.



Therefore, decentralisation policy in these countries remains still on paper.

Nevertheless, country experiences show that Pakistan launched Agrovilles programme with the concept of decentralisation and dispersion of urbanization for integrated rural development in 1972. Similarly, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea also adopted rural development programme through urbanization process. In India, the process of decentralisation started with a number of District Industrial Centre throughout the country which ultimately lead the country towards urbanization.<sup>36</sup>

Our above discussion clearly suggest that the decentralised urban centres as indicated earlier, should be created to the promotion of agriculture rather than being proto-type of the metropolis dependent on surplus extraction from the rural areas. It is expected that the recently introduced Rural Electrification Programme by the government would go a long way in the direction. What is needed now is to undertake a comprehensive plan where decentralisation would take place on the basis of potentiality rather than more criterion of administrative units. The development agencies that have already reached a level should be further diffused and more delegation of authority for local planning and mobilisation of resources should be given.

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36. United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD). *Growth Pole Strategy and Regional Development Planning in Asia.*; and R. Sobhan, *Ibid.*, p. 385.