

P R E F A C E

The study on Urban Habitats and Levels of Development of different towns of Koch Bihar District makes a part of the study in Urban Geography, in which I have tried to explain the existing position, growth and density of population, levels of development, the related problems and makes some recommendation, suggestions and future directions from a geographical point of view. The State of Koch Bihar which once formed a part of ancient kingdom of Kamrupa, Khens, Koch has great historical traditions. The district is pre-eminently an agricultural district and agriculture forms principal occupation of this district. Most of the people of this district are engaged in agricultural pursuits for earning livelihood for their families. The urban areas or towns of this district are the centres of trade and commerce as well as service centres of their hinter lands. They have enough scope to development activities. Besides, the towns have the potentiality to develop not only as a nodal growth centre for the agriculture based products and small scale industries but also as a tourist centres. Cooch Behar Municipality, the district headquarters, once upon a time as a State Capital, the Maharaja of Koch Bihar engaged foreign experts to prepare a plan for this town. The existing grid iron pattern road network with well conceived vistas, places, buildings, corroborates this fact. Thus in past, as a state capital and now as a district headquarters, the town has been catering to a large number of settlements in terms of facilities and services not only to the surrounding settlements but also the semi-urban settlement of the district. Surrounding by a large no of hinterland, this district headquarters has to cater to the needs of urban amenities and industrialization to a vast population. Accept Cooch Behar, all towns are unplanned where the primary activity still dominates in the urban environment leading to haphazard growth offering by the migrants came from Bangladesh due to communal disturbances and the influx of rural people to urban areas. As it appears rapid growth rate of population, lack of urban amenities, lack of land use management, housing problem, unemployment, influx of rural population, inadequate transport or infrastructural facilities, waste and sewage disposal, lack of health facilities, juvenile delinquencies, low per capita income , lower the availability of funds, low level of industrialization, environmental hazards like floods, soil erosion, depletion of forests are some serious problems of the different urban centers of Koch Bihar district. The proper steps taken to improve the situation will help the economy of different towns of the district to a great extent and also may generate more employment than any other field in future.

After outlining the objectives and the major theoretical concerns and problems of the research, it may be useful to mention the contents of the chapters and how these have been arranged in this dissertation. The present study has been organized into the seven chapters.

Chapter I: Introduction starts with the meaning and definition of urban and urbanization by different geographers and enters into the theoretical discussion with the emphasis on the present situation of urbanization and urban development of West Bengal as well as the study area and finally deals with the objectives, methodology, research questions or hypothesis and review of literature.

Chapter II: Historical and geographical background acquaints the reader with the great historical traditions of the ancient kingdom of the state of KochBihar and the origin of the earliest town, origin of municipal and census towns, location and sitting, characteristics and morphology of different towns and finally the urban scene of the towns of this district.

Chapter III: Demographic characteristics deals with urban population, density, decadal variation, level of urbanization, literacy, Sex-ratio, caste, workers- non-workers, occupation and their level of development in different towns of KochBihar district since 1951-2001.

Chapter IV: Levels of Socio-economic development deals with the social indicators like education, urban amenities, recreational facilities, bank and co-operative movement, industry, trade and commerce and their levels development.

Chapter – V: Levels of infra-structural facilities deals with the nature and aspects of infra-structural facilities like medical or health, post and telegraph, transport and communication facilities of different towns of KochBihar district and their levels of development.

Chapter VI: Peoples Perception attempts to analyse Perception or attitudes of the peoples towards developmental issues of different towns of Koch Bihar district based on primary data

Chapter VII: Conclusion Future direction and Suggestions; attempts to sum up the major findings of the earlier exercises deals with the level of development of different towns of Koch Bihar district and seeks to offer future directions as to how far these can be applied in solving the civic and urban development, problems and offer some positive and constructive suggestions.