

Identification of Rurban Centres in Determining Regional Development in the Hinterland of Koch Bihar, West Bengal, India

Authors : Ballari Bagchi

Abstract : The dynamism ingrained in the process of urban-rural integration is manifested in the emergence of rurban settlements, referring to areas that combine the characteristics of agricultural activities found in rural zones with those of suburban living areas and industrialised zones. The concept of rurbanisation refers to the idea of introducing urban conveniences and opportunities, to rural areas in an attempt to stem rural urban migration. In the backdrop of the worldwide problem of disharmonised urban-rural dependence and the associated problems in urban and rural areas, the present study seeks to explore the potentialities of few settlements having a blend of rural and urban characteristics in the urban field of Koch Bihar. The prime concern of the present paper is three-fold: (i) to identify the rurban centres, (ii) to analyse the spatial integration of these identified centres with the rural areas situated in the urban periphery, and (iii) to suggest the necessities to be introduced in these settlements. The methodology applied here includes rurban index, gravity model, and functional classification of rurban centres, correlation and regression analysis and cartographic representation of data collected through primary and secondary sources. The investigation has identified a number of settlements potentially viable to be termed as rurban centres which may render services to the other less equipped rural areas in all aspects of life and thereby would lessen the burden on Koch Bihar urban centre. The levels of infrastructure of these settlements should be such that it might even attract the urban population in a reverse direction. The villages belonging to the lower rung of these service settlements would require metalled road connection with these intermediate settlements in addition to their connection with the core town. That is to say, a proper policy needs to be adopted in this regard to furnish these settlements with required infrastructures for serving their own population as well as the population of other villages. As a consequence of that, the idea of a well-coordinated settlement hierarchy may emerge in future.

Keywords : Hinterland, rurban, settlement hierarchy, urban-rural integration

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