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URBANIZATION IN PUNJAB-HARYANA REGION, 2011

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The subsistence nature of Indian urbanization process (due to it being the product of mainly rural-urban migration) and lopsided nature of the country's urban system (due to it being embedded in growth of tertiary sector and neglect of secondary sector) notwithstanding, the post-Independence scenario of Indian urbanization process did make its dent on the country's demographic scene as its urban population base widened significantly from mere 62 million in 1951 to a lofty 377 million in 2011 registering a massive 600 % increase in six decades. However, even such a massive expansion of its urban base seems to have failed in pushing this poorly urbanized country out of woods as even today barely 31.6 % of the country's population could claim urban living status, mind it, only status and not necessarily the quality of life, as a large chunk of Indian urban population may be living in urban slums. It may be interesting to examine as to how far such a situation was the product of our wonky policies especially with respect to infrastructure development. Thus, the most pertinent question here would be to see whether or not all heat on urban infrastructure development was lost in hoopla of policy wonks. For preparing well-thought out and far-sighted plans for development of urban infrastructure for a strong self-sustaining future urban system, exhaustive prognostic surveys are unavoidable. The time is ripe for supplementing the diagnostic surveys with prognostic surveys especially in the field of urban infrastructure development.

However, in India the degree of urbanization varies from the lowest of 10.04 %

in the hill state of Himachal Pradesh to the highest of 62.17 % in Goa, signaling wide ranging spatial variations in the degree of urbanization from one-third of the national average (31.65%) to two times of the national average. The study region comprising of Punjab and Haryana states had an average of 36.19 % of its population living in urban centers of widely varying size which matched fairly well with the overall national scene. Thus, the study region was far from being a highly urbanized part of the country. Instead, if the average income level could be any indication, the study region should have been a fairly highly urbanized part of the country. The region's poor performance on the urban development front does call for an explanation. Firstly, the region has been the traditional bread basket of the nation where the natural focus of policy prescriptions has been farmer-centric at least since the first green revolution of the country in which the study region played the leading role. Secondly, surprisingly enough even the large in-flux of displaced persons from areas now in Pakistan at the time of partition and the consequent emergence of model towns and make-shift towns, the God sent opportunity of initiating large scale urban development as had been done by Israel under a similar situation, also seems to have been lost partly because of the resource crunch and mainly because of lack of proper vision in the then wonky policies.

Table 1 and the accompanying Fig.1, together display spatial variations in the degree of urbanization within the study region. The Punjab component (37.49 %) of the study region

Table 1
Punjab-Haryana Region: Urban Population as Percentage to Total Population, 2011

| State/ District | Percentage | State/ District | Percentage |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Punjab | 37.49 | Haryana | 34.88 |
| Ludhiana | 59.14 | Faridabad | 79.51 |
| SAS Nagar | 55.17 | Gurgaon | 68.82 |
| Amritsar | 53.64 | Panchkula | 55.81 |
| Jalandhar | 53.18 | Panipat | 46.05 |
| Patiala | 40.27 | Ambala | 44.38 |
| Bathinda | 35.99 | Rohtak | 42.04 |
| Faridkot | 35.20 | Yamunanagar | 38.94 |
| Kapurthala | 34.90 | Hisar | 31.74 |
| Barnala | 31.97 | Sonapat | 31.27 |
| Sangrur | 31.24 | Karnal | 30.21 |
| Fatehgarh Sahib | 30.87 | Kurukshetra | 28.95 |
| Gurdaspur | 28.50 | Rewari | 25.93 |
| Muktsar | 27.99 | Jhajjar | 25.39 |
| Ferozpur | 27.25 | Sirsa | 24.65 |
| Rupnagar | 26.02 | Jind | 22.90 |
| Moga | 22.55 | Palwal | 22.69 |
| Mansa | 21.26 | Kaithal | 21.97 |
| Hoshiarpur | 21.15 | Bhiwani | 19.66 |
| SBS Nagar | 20.43 | Fatehabad | 19.06 |
| Tarn Taran | 12.63 | Mahendragrah | 14.41 |
| — | — | Mewat | 11.39 |
| Regional Average | 36.19 | — | — |

Source: i) Director, Census Operation, Punjab
 ii) Director, Census Operation, Haryana

was only a shade better than the Haryana (34.88 %) sub-region and both had marginally higher degree of urbanization than the national average (31.6 %). However, within Haryana sub-region, the degree of urbanization varied between 11.39 % in Muslim predominant Mewat district to the highest of 79.51 % in Faridabad (industrial) district. In case of Punjab sub-region, the variation was not that wide. It was restricted to the lowest of 12.63 % in Tarn Taran to the highest of only 59.14 % in Ludhiana (industrial) district.

There were only three districts in the region namely Mewat, Tarn Taran and Mahendragarh where only less than 15% of population had urban residence. While Mewat had a large component of comparatively socially and economically backward Muslim population, Mahendragarh had difficult sand dunes infested terrain with wide extremities of climate and Tarn

Taran suffered from its location close to international border, with a hostile country. Tarn Taran district also seems to have suffered a political neglect. That explains the bi-modal location of poorly urbanized parts of the study region-one in its north and other in its south.

In another set of 17 districts (9 in Haryana and 8 in Punjab sub-region) degree of urbanization was low and ranged between 15 and 30 % signifying that there were large number of poorly urbanized districts in the study region. Spatially, the degree of urbanization was comparatively low in western and southern Haryana in comparison to its eastern and central parts. In case of Punjab sub-region, the western belt along the international border (except Amritsar district) and the northeastern belt consisting of cho-infested foot-hill zone had low degree of urbanization. Thus, whether it was

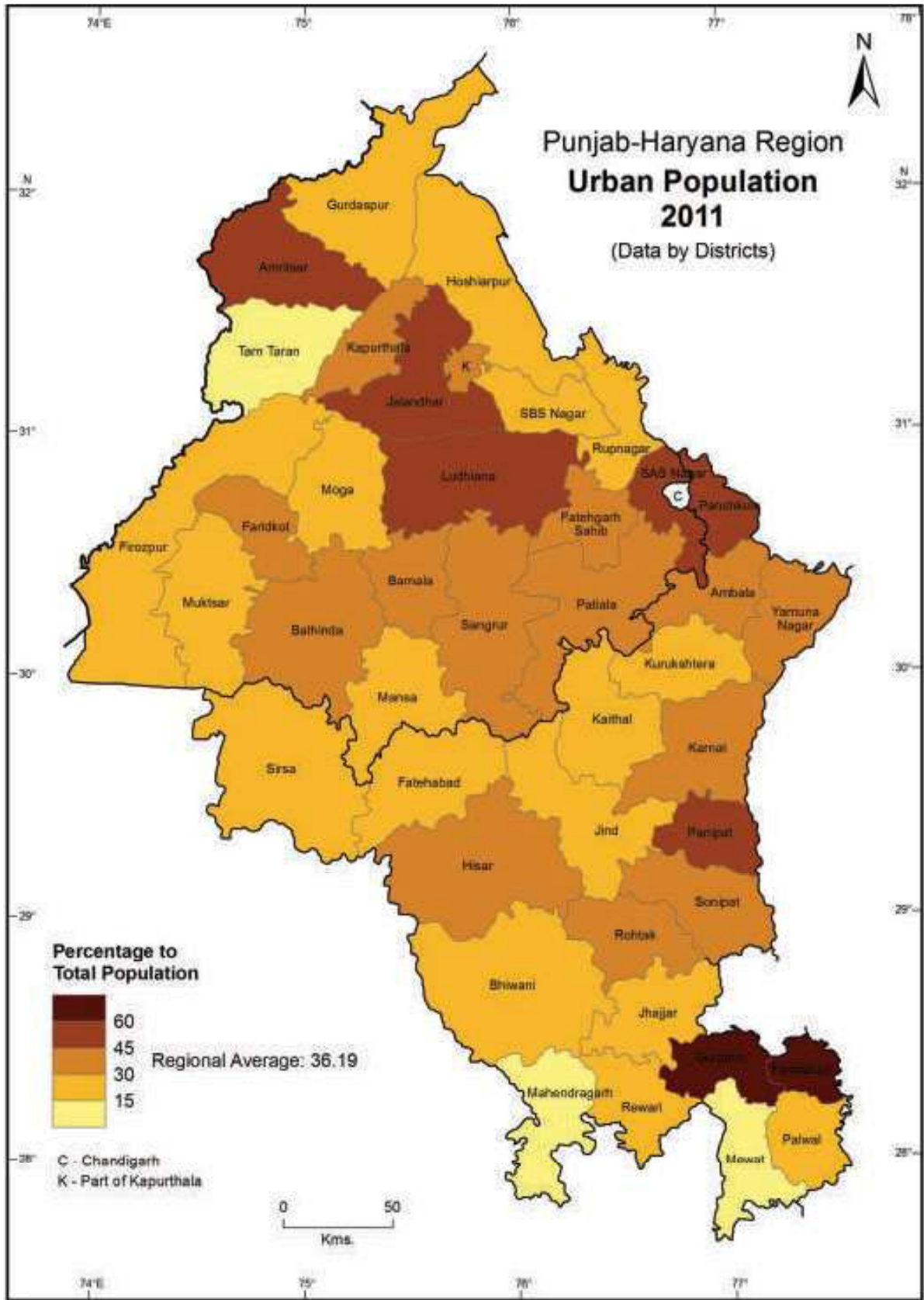


Fig. 1

difficult terrain (sand-dunes infested or cho-infested foot-hill zone) or poor industrial investment due to border location, or poor agricultural development due to late arrival of canal irrigation, all resulted in poor urbanization in both Punjab and Haryana sub-regions.

In contrast, the fast emerging industrial districts of Gurgaon, Faridabad and Panipat or traditionally industrial districts of Ludhiana (Hosiery) Jalandhar (Sports) and Amritsar (Textiles) or Panchkula and S.A.S. Nagar districts located close to Chandigarh, all displayed high degree of urbanization as the proportion of urban population here ranged between 45 to 80 per cent. However, it may be pointed out that no district in Punjab had more than 60 % of its population living in urban areas while in case of Haryana both Gurgaon (68.8 %) and Faridabad (79.5 %) had more than 60 % of their population living in urban areas. It is obvious that while in case of Punjab the traditionally industrial districts of Amritsar, Ludhiana and Jalandhar displayed high degree of urbanization, in case of Haryana the location of industrial districts reflected the influence of the factor of proximity to the NCT of Delhi which attracted large number of miscellaneous industries to these districts. In comparison, the districts of S.A.S Nagar of Punjab and Panchkula of Haryana were located close to the union territory of Chandigarh which has come to emerge as a symbol of high quality urban living. Their proximity to the union territory of Chandigarh attracted large number of retirees to settle in these districts apart from locating a large number of offices and their headquarters to the cities of Panchkula and Mohali from Haryana and Punjab, respectively located close to the state capital of Chandigarh.

In fine, the study region is not fortunately placed vis-à-vis degree of urbanization as it is only moderately urbanized. Its poor performance on this front is associated with (i) the subsistence nature of urbanization where in-flow of employment seeking ruralties into the

region's poorly industrialized urban centers contributes mainly to the urban process; (ii) its farmer-centric policies where the electricity supply to the farming sector is ensured at the cost of industries; (iii) its border location with an unfriendly country with whom the country has been engaged in three major wars in six decades, apart from intermittent skirmishes all along the border that too are too often; (iv) the flight of industry especially from Punjab sub-region during the decades of critical law and order situation; and (v) its wonky policies especially of Punjab government vis-à-vis rehabilitating the affected industries or vis-a-vis attracting big industrial houses to the state as was being done by Haryana government. Above all, being the bread basket of the country with a high agricultural prosperity index, the study region's rich potential in area of agro-based industry also seems to have been ignored or lost in the circlet of policy wonks.

The spatial pattern of degree of urbanization in the study region does reflect both the positive impact of its proximity to the national capital of Delhi and the negative impact of its location close to the international border with Pakistan. Amritsar was the typical example of the latter. It had emerged as commercial capital of joint Punjab but lost all its shine once its commercial catchment suffered a crude surgery of history in the form of partition and a new international border got located in the heart of its catchment area. It has taken the city decades to register a sort of resurgence.

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