

Role of Census Towns on Urbanization Processes in North 24 Parganas District, West Bengal

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Abstract : *The new urban areas which are transformed from rural character to urban character and recognized by Census of India, nearer or away from Urban Local Bodies are known as Census Town (CT). But the CTs, their services and amenities depend upon the rural panchayat administration. Actually the large village, market areas, industrial areas and others rural areas adjacent to large urban centers which have fulfilled the criteria of urban centers have been treated as Census Towns. The role of Census towns for urbanization processes and urban agglomeration of any urban areas are very much important. Since Independence, North 24 Parganas district has experienced a dramatic growth in size and volume of statutory towns, but very little importance has been given to the Census Towns which have significantly contributed to the overall urbanisation of the district. This paper is an attempt to understand the role of Census Towns on urbanization processes in North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal.*

Keywords : *Urban Agglomeration, Urban Civic Amenities, Urbanization, Urban Growth, Urban Crises*

Introduction

The state governments declare settlements as urban areas, which include all types of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), e.g. Municipal Corporations, Municipalities, Notified Area, Nagar Panchayats, etc. These towns are known as Statutory Towns (STs). On the other hand *census towns* are administered by Gram Panchayat, but their physical character is like an urban areas. Census of India has marked the following criteria for defining Census Towns (i) A minimum population of 5000, (ii) 75 per cent of their male working population engaged in non-agricultural activities and (iii) A density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km. The *Census Towns* (CT) is first recognized by the census of India in 1971. Urbanization processes are very complex and dynamic. Urbanization is an index of transformation from traditional rural economies to modern industrial one. A society may switch to an urban society by increasing its population, introducing non-agrarian economic activities and facilitating 'urban features'. The urbanisation of India is very special and exceptionally top-heavy in nature in comparison to the rest of the developing

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world, which accommodates every twelfth city dweller of the world and every seventh of the developing countries (Jayswal, et al., 2014). Whereas, within the nation two of every five urban dwellers (43 per cent) live in the 53 million plus cities/ urban agglomerations only (Guin and Das, 2015).

The North 24 Parganas district is highly urbanized in the state. CTs are the most important factor for these high levels of urbanization. These Census Towns have been emerged due to the shifting of economic activities from primary to secondary and tertiary activities. The changes in the quantum of Census Towns between two consecutive census years can happen in several ways, such as an increase resulting from the 'upgradation' of villages and urban outgrowths and a decrease due to the de-notification of the existing Census Towns to villages or amalgamation of existing Census Towns into Urban Local Bodies.

Study Area

The district North 24 Parganas forms the south-eastern part of the West Bengal and lies between 22°8' N to 23°16' N latitude and 88°18' E to 89°04' E longitude (Map-1). The district is bordered by the districts of Nadia in north, South 24 Parganas and Kolkata in the south, Howrah, Hooghly and Hooghly River in the west. Bangladesh forms the eastern border of the North 24 Parganas district.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

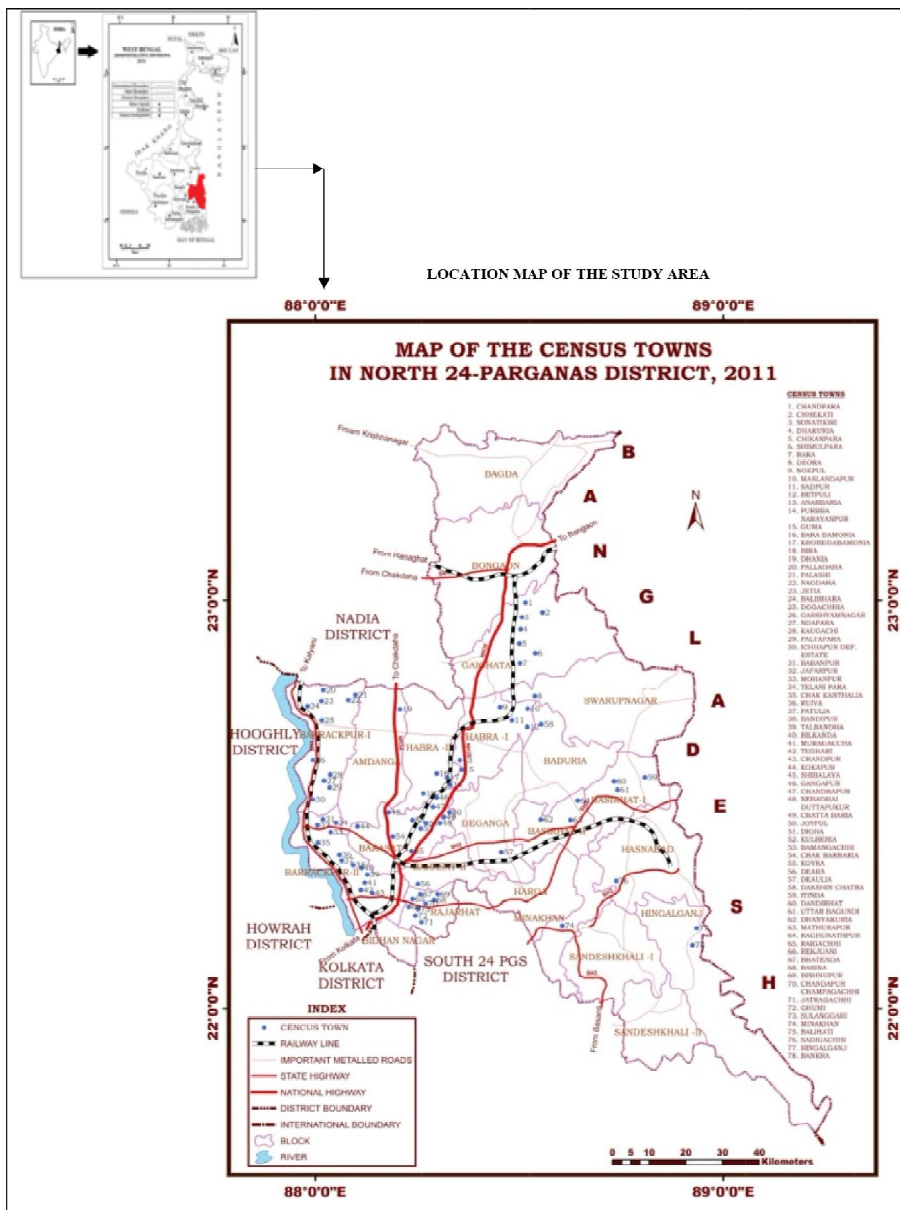
1. To study the pattern and trend of growth of Census Towns in the study area.
2. To study the Census towns are playing important role in the growth of urbanization of the district as a whole.
3. To study the problems of Census Towns on urbanization in the district.

Data base and Methodology

The study is based on secondary sources of data. Secondary sources of data are mainly various Census Publications, Block Development Offices, Municipal Statistics of West Bengal and District Statistical Hand Book. The statistical method like, Aggregate Z-Score and Aggregate Rank-Score (Kendall's method) (Mahmood, 1977: 87-97) have been applied for the pattern and levels of urbanization of Census Towns in the district.

Contribution of Census Towns to Urban Growth

The rapid increase in the number of Census Towns in the district is an important statistical fact. In 2011, the census towns have contributed much more than the previous census years. Although the census towns don't contribute much



MAP-1

Source: Prepared by Author

to the overall urbanisation of the district due to their smaller size, their rise indicates the growth of rural settlements with urban characteristics. The growth of census towns in the district can be considered as an indicator of development as they are new centres of non-agrarian economies even though smaller in size and volume.

Table- 1 Growth Rate of Urban Area and Urban Population of Urban Local Bodies and Census Towns in North 24 Parganas District (1971-2011)

Census Years	Number of Urban Local Bodies	Population of Urban Local Bodies	Population of Urban Local Bodies in Percentage	Area of Urban Local Bodies in sq.km.	Number of Census Town	Population of Census Towns	Census Town Population in Percentage	Area of Census Towns in sq km.
1971	26	1909047	92.39	302.9	14	157219	7.61	51.57
1981	27	2535493	89.87	332.35	19	285873	10.13	71.68
1991	27	3242414	86.92	346.55	32	487886	13.08	89.04
2001	28	4656718	96.00	467.1	20	194229	4.00	32.8
2011	29	5001716	87.26	451.43	78	730446	12.74	172.48

Source: Compiled by Author from Different Census, 1971-2011

After independence of India, influx of huge refugees from neighbouring country, industrialization, improvement of civic amenities and other pull factors of urban centres which lead to rapid growth of Census Towns in North 24 Parganas district. As a result number of Census Towns increased from 14 in 1971 to 78 in 2011. Population of census towns are gradually increasing from 7.61 per cent in 1971 to 12.74 per cent in 2011. Urban space of CTs also gradually increases from 51.57 sq.km. in 1971 to 172.48 sq. km. in 2011. So, the role of Census Towns on urbanization processes is very much important in the district.

Initially, experts like Kundu (2011) argued that increase of census towns seems to be because of ‘census activism’ which artificially inflected by the census authority. This massive increase in the number of Census Towns initiated conflicts among to all. It means that the emergence of these Census Towns cannot be explained by the sectoral diversification in the villages, while some also ruled out the possibility of ‘census activism’ as the most important factor. The reason behind the growth of a huge number of Census Towns in the district is due to the changes in the economy, which includes the massive decline of workforce in agriculture and related activities and shift to the tertiary sector (Karmakar, 2015).

Urbanization Pattern of Census Towns in the District

The role of Census Towns for urbanization and urban agglomeration of any urban area is very much important. The Census Towns (CT) is administered by Gram Panchayat. Actually the large village, market areas, industrial areas and others rural

areas adjacent to large urban centers which have fulfilled the criteria of urban centers have been treated as Census Towns. In the district, the total numbers of Census Towns are 78 in 2011. The population of Census Towns is 12.96 per cent to total urban population of the district in 2011. The most of the Census Towns are size class of IV, V and VI. Population density is the most important variable for measuring the levels of urbanization. The low population density Census Towns are showing under the C.D. Blocks of Minakhan, Hingalganj, Amdanga and Bashirhat-I respectively. The highly population density Census Towns are showing under the C.D. Blocks of Barrackpore-II. Rests of the Census Towns are moderately dense. The Census Towns under C.D. blocks of Barrackpore-I, Barrackpore-II, Barasat-I and Rajarhat are highly urbanized towns as compared to other Census Towns.

Maximum numbers of CTs in the district have been formed in 2011. Only two variables have been selected for experiencing the levels of urbanization of Census Towns, namely population size and population density of the Census Towns. The very high urbanized CTs are situated in the blocks of Barrackpore, Barasat and Rajarhat, which are also under KMDA. The low urbanized CTs are situated in the blocks of Minakhan, Gaighata, Swarnapnagar, Basirhat, Hingalgaunge and Hasnabad. These Blocks are basically rural in character.

Spatial Distribution of Census Towns in the District

The distributional patterns of CTs are distributed all over the district, but the concentrations of CTs are basically behind the local railway stations. The maximum number of CTs in the district are concentrated in the blocks of Barrackpur - I (11), Barrackpur - II (13), Barasat-I (12) and Rajarhat (9). So the western part of the district is highly concentrated by CTs. The minimum CTs are located in the rest of the blocks. From the distributional pattern of CTs in the district, it is clear that high concentration of CTs have occurred in and around the Kolkata Urban Agglomeration (KUA). The surrounding rural areas of any urban centres transform very rapidly to CTs. The urban population is maximum in the blocks namely Habra – II, Habra – I, Barasat – I, Barrackpur – I, Rajarhat and Barrackpur – II respectively. The Census Towns under these C.D. Blocks are located nearby Kolkata and help to agglomerate of Kolkata UA. Rest of the Blocks their level of urban populations are low.

Role of Census Towns for Urban Agglomerations (UA)

The concept of Urban Agglomeration was adopted for the first time in 1981. The role of Urban Agglomeration (U.A.) is the most important symptom for urbanization. Urban Agglomeration is a continuous urban spread constituting adjacent towns and adjoining outgrowth or two or more physically contiguous towns together with or without outgrowths of such towns. The following table and map have been shown the Urban Agglomerations in North 24 Parganas district, 2011.

Table: 2 Spatial Distributions of Census Towns in the District

Sl. No.	C.D. Block and Number of CTs	Sl. No	Census Town	Class	Population of Towns	Total Population of Towns
1	Gaighata (7)	1	Chandpara (CT)	V	7113	64761
		2	Chhekati (CT)	VI	4995	
		3	Sonatikiri (CT)	V	6919	
		4	Dhakuria (CT)	IV	10165	
		5	Chikanpara (CT)	V	9594	
		6	Shimulpur (CT)	III	20803	
		7	Bara (CT)	V	5172	
2	Swarupnagar (1)	8	Deora (CT)	VI	4360	4360
3	Habra - I (6)	9	Nokpul (CT)	V	7737	49549
		10	Maslandapur (CT)	IV	10790	
		11	Sadpur (CT)	V	7773	
		12	Betpuli (CT)	V	9404	
		13	Anarbaria (CT)	V	5895	
		14	Purba Narayanpur (CT)	V	7950	
		15	Guma (CT)	IV	12025	
4	Habra - II (4)	16	Bara Bamonía (CT)	V	7193	35815
		17	Khorddabamonía (CT)	V	5856	
		18	Bira (CT)	IV	10741	
5	Amdanga (1)	19	Dhanía (CT)	V	6659	6659
6	Barrackpur - I (11)	20	Palladaha (CT)	V	5994	88567
		21	Palashi (CT)	V	6748	
		22	Nagdaha (CT)	V	8192	
		23	Jetia (CT)	V	6349	
		24	Balibhara (CT)	V	8521	
		25	Dogachhia (CT)	V	5705	
		26	Garshyamnagar (CT)	V	7611	
		27	Noapara (P) (CT)	IV	10819	
		28	Kaugachhi (CT)	IV	17001	
		29	Paltapara (CT)	V	6408	
		30	Ichhapur Defence Estate (CT)	V	5219	

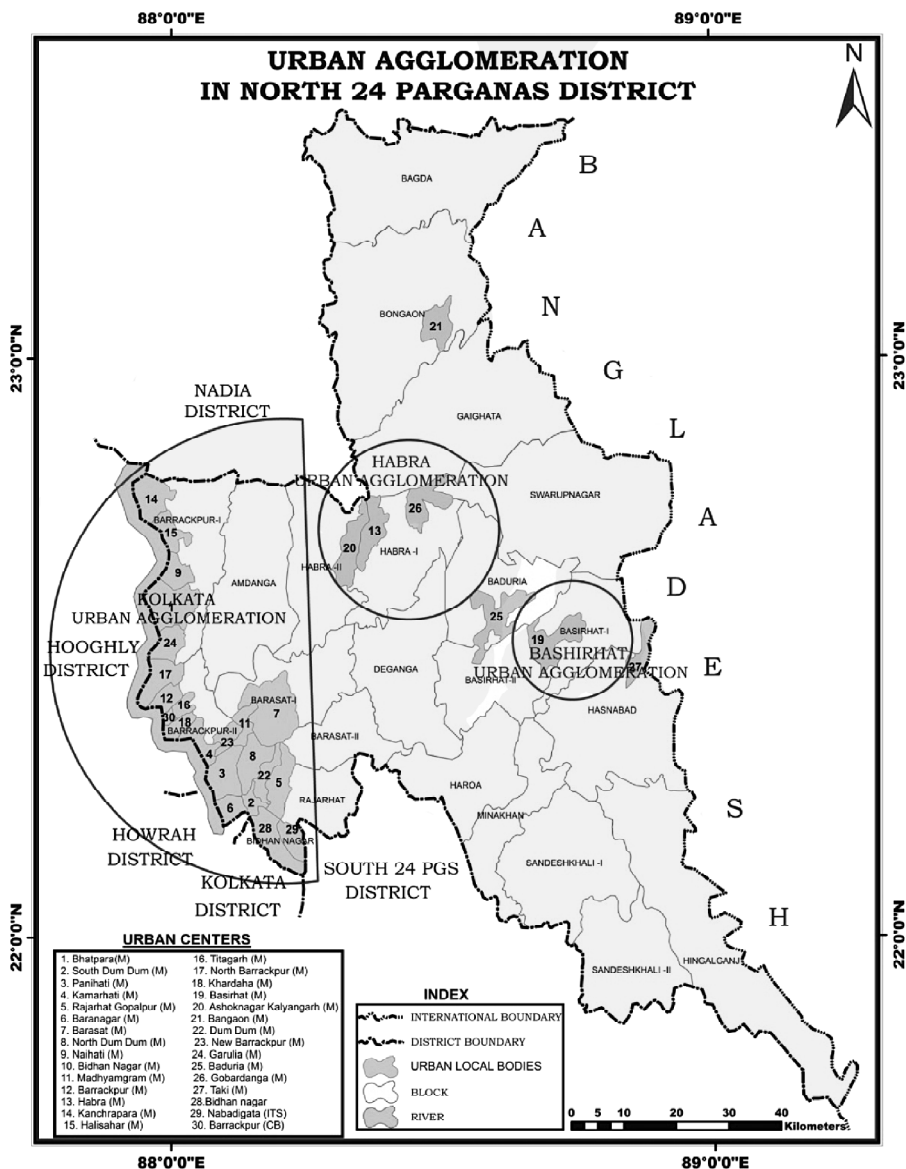
Sl. No.	C.D. Block and Number of CTs	Sl. No	Census Town	Class	Population of Towns	Total Population of Towns
7	Barrackpur -II (13)	31	Babanpur (P) (CT)	V	8942	165297
		32	Jafarpur (CT)	IV	19062	
		33	Mohanpur (CT)	V	9096	
		34	Teleni Para (CT)	IV	17781	
		35	Chak Kanthalia (CT)	IV	11108	
		36	Ruiya (CT)	IV	17661	
		37	Patulia (CT)	IV	16979	
		38	Bandipur (CT)	V	8115	
		39	Talbandha (CT)	IV	17802	
		40	Bilkanda (CT)	V	6081	
		41	Muragachha (CT)	IV	13249	
		42	Teghari (CT)	V	8491	
		43	Chandpur (CT)	IV	10930	
8	Barasat - I (12)	44	Kokapur (CT)	V	6317	119402
		45	Shibalaya (CT)	V	5830	
		46	Gangapur (CT)	V	6301	
		47	Chandrapur (CT)	V	5047	
		48	Nebadhai Duttapukur (CT)	III	25557	
		49	Chatta Baria (CT)	IV	12537	
		50	Joypul (CT)	IV	16134	
		51	Digha (CT)	V	8159	
		52	Kulberia (CT)	V	6993	
		53	Bamangachhi (CT)	V	6824	
		54	Chak Barbaria (CT)	V	8088	
		55	Koyra (CT)	IV	11615	
9	Barasat – II (1)	56	Deara (CT)	IV	11994	11994
10	Deganga (1)	57	Deulia (CT)	V	9663	9663
11	Baduria (1)	58	Dakshin Chatra (CT)	V	7275	7275
12	Basirhat - I (3)	59	Itinda (CT)	V	8679	21093
		60	Dandirhat (P) (CT)	V	6387	
		61	Uttar Bagundi (CT)	V	6027	

Sl. No.	C.D. Block and Number of CTs	Sl. No	Census Town	Class	Population of Towns	Total Population of Towns
13	Basirhat - II (3)	62	Dhanyakuria (CT)	V	5148	17290
		63	Mathurapur (CT)	V	6803	
		64	Raghunathpur (P) (CT)	V	5339	
14	Rajarhat (9)	65	Raigachhi (CT)	V	8245	100286
		66	Rekjuani (CT)	IV	16553	
		67	Bhatenda (CT)	V	6349	
		68	Basina (CT)	V	5413	
		69	Bishnupur (CT)	IV	12660	
		70	Chandapur Champagachhi (CT)	V	6431	
		71	Jatragachhi (CT)	V	6890	
		72	Ghuni (CT)	III	24249	
		73	Sulanggari (CT)	IV	13496	
15	Minakhan (2)	74	Minakhan (CT)	VI	3474	7111
		75	Balihati (CT)	VI	3637	
16	Hasnabad (1)	76	Sadigachhi (CT)	V	6248	6248
17	Hingalganj (2)	77	Hingalganj (CT)	V	8179	15076
		78	Bankra (CT)	V	6897	

Source: Compiled by Author from Census, 2011

According to Census 2011, three Urban Agglomerations (UA) having in the district, namely Kolkata U.A., Habra U. A. and Bashirhat U.A. In part of Kolkata U.A., there are different types of urban centres like ULBs, Census Towns, and Outgrowths.

In this district, 22 ULBs and the Census Towns under Barrackpore-I, Barrackpore-II, Barasat-I and Rajarhat C.D. Blocks are under Kolkata U.A. The urban areas under the Kolkata U.A. are more urbanized and highly urbanized areas are located along the eastern part of Hooghly River in the district. The Habra U.A. constitutes with two municipalities, namely Habra and Ashoknagar Kalyangarh and the census towns under Habra-I and Habra-II C.D Block. Lastly the Bashirhat U.A. constitutes with Bashirhat municipality and Census Towns under Bashirhat-I and Bashirhat-II C.D Block. Habra UA and Bashirhat UA are comparatively having low pace urbanization in the district. Many of the previous studies (Kundu, 2011; Guin and Das, 2015; Kundu, and Malik, 2016) reveal that most of the new Census Towns were concentrated around the metropolises and within the large UAs. So, from the



MAP-2

Source: Prepared by Author

above analysis the Census Towns (CTs) under the C.D. Blocks namely Barrackpur-I, Barrackpur-II, Barasat-I, Rajarhat, Habra-I, Habra -II, Bashirhat-I and Bashirhat - II have been more responsible for formation of U.A. in the district as well as urbanization processes.

Table- 3 Urban Agglomerations in North 24 Parganas District, 2011

Urban Agglomeration	Number of ULBs	Urban Local Bodies	Census Towns Under C.D. Blocks
Kolkata U.A.	22	1. Kancharapara, 2. Halisahar, 3. Naihati, 4. Bhatpara, 5. Garulia, 6. North Barrackpur, 7. Barrackpur, 8. Titagarh, 9. Barasat, 10. Khardaha, 11. Panihati, 12. Kamarhati, 13. Baranagar, 14. North Dum Dum, 15. Dum Dum, 16. South Dum Dum, 17. Madhyamgram, 18. Bidhannagar, 19. Rajarhat Gopalpur, 20. New Barrackpur, 21. Barrackpur Cantonment Board, 22. Nabadiganta Industrial Township	Barrackpur-I, Barrackpur-II, Barasat-I and Rajarhat.
Habra U.A.	2	1. Habra, 2. Ashoknagar Kalyangarh	Habra-I and Habra -II
Bashirhat U.A.	1	1. Bashirhat	Bashirhat-I and Bashirhat -II

Source: Compiled by Author from Census, 2011

Findings

- The Population of Census Towns is gradually increasing from 7.61 per cent in 1971 to 12.74 per cent in 2011. The maximum numbers of CTs (58 CTs) have been formed in 2011 (20 CTs in 2001, and 78 CTs in 2011). So, the role of Census Towns for urbanization is very much important in the district. The balanced urbanization and urban growth may be achieved by promoting and acknowledging Census Towns near the larger urban centres.
- The role of Census towns in the formation of Urban Agglomeration (U.A.) is very much important in the district.
- Population growth rate of Census towns of the district are more than the Municipal Towns during the period of 1971 to 2011.
- On the other hand, very high urbanized CTs are situated in the blocks of Barrackpore, Barasat and Rajarhat blocks which are also under KMDA. The low urbanized CTs are situated in the Blocks of Minakhan, Gaighata, Swarupnagar, Basirhat, Hingalgaunge and Hasnabad respectively. These Blocks are basically rural in character and situated away from Kolkata and Barasat.
- The Population of Census Towns is gradually increasing from 4.62 per cent in 1951 to 12.74 per cent in 2011. The maximum numbers of CTs (58 CTs) have been formed in 2011, but their amenities depend upon the rural administration. So, the inadequate urban service and amenities are the major

problems for CTs in the district. There is the administrative gap of these CTs area. When these CTs have transformed to ULBs, the problems will be solved.

Suggestions

Urban Outgrowths and Census towns are the urban area under the rural administration. Proper developments of Outgrowths and Census Towns are held up due to the lack of proper planning and inadequate financial support by Gram Panchayat. Actually these both areas are in transition between rural and urban area. To govern this type of transitional area 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) has recommended the Nagar Panchayat or Town Panchayat for the “transitional area”. So, the Nagar Panchayats system has to be needed for urban development in North 24 Parganas district. The responsibilities of Town Panchayats are following civic services: providing basic Amenities: roads, street lights, water supply, public health, drainage; granting of building licenses; levying of taxes: property tax, vacant land tax, profession tax, water charges; issuing birth & death certificates; implementation of state and central schemes etc. All the Census Towns of the district are to be merged to nearby Urban Local Bodies, for the permanent urban status and accession to the urban services, amenities, and infrastructure. In North 24 Parganas district, there are 78 CTs which are to be needed to merge to nearby ULBs or to establish as new ULB for urban development in the district.

Conclusion

In the decade 2001-2011, the district has experienced a distinctive rise in urbanisation, where the Census Towns have contributed significantly to the total level of urbanisation of the district. The rural settlements rose to the Census Towns, with urban characteristics although being rural administration. This implies a rise in settlements with non-agrarian economies in the district and particularly in western part of district.

Role of Census Towns on urbanization in North 24 Parganas District has revealed the saturated status of ULBs in the district. From the spatial aspect, CTs are highly concentrated in Kolkata U.A. These features represent that, not only the growth of CTs, but also growth of urban population in the district. CTs formed due to more rural-urban interaction. High mobility of people from rural to urban areas and from mother town to CTs areas gradually is increasing in the district. The formation of CTs also represents the dispersed urbanization and helps to keep the balanced urbanization in the district. The urban amenities in rural areas should be implemented in the CTs of the district, for improvement of the quality of life. All the Census Towns of the district are to be merged to nearby urban local bodies, for the permanent urban status and accession to the urban services, amenities, and infrastructure. So, in North 24 Parganas district, there are 78 CTs which are to be

needed to merge to nearby ULBs or to establish as new ULB for developed urbanization in the district and then the balanced urbanization may be achieved in the district.

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