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Title: Process and Patterns of Urbanisation in Bihar: A Geographical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Bihar lies in a fertile middle and lower Ganga plain of the country, but its level of urbanisation is very low. This work has attempted to improve understanding of Bihar's extraordinary low urban transformation, especially in the post-independence period from 1951 to 2011.

The stagnant agricultural productivity in the condition of high man-land ratio and targeted state led industrialisation and growth policies with emphasis on resource-rich southern Bihar (presently, Jharkhand) could not realised demographic shift of the population to urban centres in the northern Bihar (presently, Bihar). It has resulted in slow pace of urbanisation in the state in its recent history. In a way it can be argued that second phase of de-urbanisation of Bihar started since 1981, first one being during the British rule.

In the past few decades, growth in the urban population in Bihar has been at best modest and fluctuating. The process of urbanisation in Bihar has continued to be top-heavy, oriented towards large cities. This is because of higher demographic growth in larger cities, attributable to both natural increase in the resident population and higher net in-migration.

Concentration of population which due to slow rate of urbanisation and out-migration to other states has shown sign of reducing gaps by districts, but since 1990s Patna has emerged as the biggest city in the state and showing symptoms of a primate city in the

absence of regional competitive big cities. There has been no drastic shift of population from rural to urban centres in the last half of the 20th century.

The state could not be benefited from globalisation and liberalisation of national economy. In fact, political instability, lack of social capital due to frequent communal riots in previous decades, anarchy in the form of parallel government of some clans, law and order situation and also an inefficient administration together with loss of human capital has deterred corporate to invest in the state which was further handicapped by lack of infrastructure.

In brief, instead of empowering deprived classes in terms of equitable distribution of wealth and power, necessary for an efficient economy and conducive for urbanisation, as envisaged in Manal paradigm, traditional class differences and power structures have been reinforced in the process of urban growth, making life very difficult for poorer new urbanites and contributing to low rural–urban movement in the state. Census of 2011 of Indian gives ray of hope as urbanisation becoming perceptible. Policies of present regime appear favourable for people to live in do business in towns and cities without fear.

A key policy intervention in increasing rural–urban migration and providing labour support to retain domestic human capital and growing industries and business would be the expansion of formal and informal systems for education and skills development. Government must endeavour to industrialise the state as it has nearby resource-rich area and can become an ideal location for industries provided strict law and order is maintained. There is also need to modernize agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy in the state. It should be developed on the lines of Punjab. It has potential, but it should be done in a systematic manner, then only desired outcome could be realised.