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Urban development and environmental change in Indian mega cities-case of Delhi

R.B. Singh^{1*}

¹Dept. of Geography, Univ. of Delhi, India

Indian cities are growing at faster rate due to urbanization and industrialization. 35 million plus cities constitutes more than one-third (37.85 per cent) of the total urban population. During the last (1991-2001) decade, the number of million plus cities increased from 23 to 35 and is likely to increase to 50 by 2011. Phenomenal rise in the population of Delhi mega city in the recent past largely due to migration from rural India. Delhi is a land locked city. It is situated at an average altitude of 216m above mean sea level. The topography has two physical features, the Ridge and the river Yamuna. The forest has been described as semi-arid and open scrub, including nearly 1,000 species of flowering plants. According to Population Census 2000, the highest percentage of urban population in India is in Delhi (93.18 per cent). Out of a total of 126, 000 industries, there are 98 000 industries in non-conforming areas as per the Master Plan of Delhi, 2001. In July 1996, closure and shifting of 168 industrial units in Delhi have been undertaken. In September 2000, 27 polluting industries were shut down. Industries were shifted to outskirts villages of Narela and Bawana. Faulty government policy promoted small-scale industrial development in non-conforming areas of the city. Degradation in soil, water and air noticed, further threatening serious health implications. Vehicular pollution is accountable for almost 70 per cent of the air pollution in Delhi. Therefore, it is essential to maintain our green cover and biodiversity as it has impact on the microclimate of Delhi. Positive relationship exists between green cover, biodiversity and micro-climate. Land Use/Cover Change monitoring can bring better understanding for status of green cover and biodiversity. The concept of development in Satellite Towns/Counter Magnets of Million plus Cities is an important step in achieving greater efficiency in the overall hierarchy of urban settlements both at national and regional levels.

Keywords: urbanization, land use change, environmental degradation, Delhi mega city, India