PREFACE

The massive increase in the percentage share of urban population has often been attributed to faster growth of towns and cities. With increasing population and demand for urban infrastructure services, the capacities of local governments in many developing and newly industrialised countries are over-burdened. Particularly small and medium towns are mostly affected as their economic bases are not strong.

Much of the existing urban infrastructure is old, worn and overworked. It needs to be rebuilt, refurbished and maintained. In recognition of these challenges and as a response to the increasing demand for improving urban infrastructure, the Central Government has launched the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) – the largest initiative to assist the development of urban infrastructure.

In view of these macro scenarios, present study is an attempt to critically evaluate the existing status of infrastructure like water, sanitation and waste management, road and transportation, power supply, education and health facilities as well as financial management for infrastructure of the city and towns of Murshidabad district of West Bengal in particular as an epitome of Indian cities and towns. It also aims at exploring the relationship between urbanization and infrastructural development in the district. At the same time, an ideal model for planning of urban infrastructure and some suggestions for improvement of the existing urban infrastructure in the district has also been put forward.

Most of the earlier studies related to infrastructure are concerned with either metropolitan cities or large cities. Moreover, these studies are related to specific sector of infrastructure e.g. water, or sanitation etc. There is a lack of studies on overall infrastructural situation and problem particularly on district level. The present study is unique in this sense.

The study is by no means exhaustive to cover all the aspects of urban infrastructure, yet it is a first district level study for Murshidabad district. However, it is hoped that this modest attempt will bring into focus the realities of urban infrastructure more meaningfully and would stimulate the interest of the academic community and others genuinely interested in the field of urban geography.

SANTINIKETAN

IFTIKAR ALAM