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Environmental Change in Coastal Region of West Bengal: A District Level Study

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Abstract: *The 21st century experiences a rapid pace of urbanization in the world and especially in the developing countries like- India. More than half of the world's population lives in cities and towns that symbolize the unprecedented growth of urbanization. This very urbanization is coupled with social, economic, spatial and environmental impacts and challenges. Though higher rate of urbanization seems to be positive sign for economic development and overall prosperity of the regions. Contemporary urbanization in developing regions means inadequate basic infrastructural amenities, substandard housing, overcrowding, depletion of green spaces, inadequate transport facilities, and non-compliance with building bye-laws and planning regulations. This leads to multiple and serious environmental problems in the form of pollution, deforestation, wet land destruction, erosion and flooding, urban sprawl, slums and squatter settlements, and aesthetic degradation which all have adverse impacts on human's well-being. Similar kinds of impacts are visible not only in the interior parts of the country but also in the coastal zones where urban places are facing multiple challenges and ecological crisis as well. The present study focuses on the development and environment in the coastal region (including districts East Medinipur and South 24-Parganas) of West Bengal, a state with 31.87 percent level of urbanization as per Census of India 2011. Since this study is in preliminary phase, there has been made an attempt to provide an overview on the quality of life and environmental conditions in the coastal region. Present study is based on secondary source of data and information, and tries to address the following objectives: a) to examine the urbanization- environment relationships and its consequences in the coastal areas, and b) to identify and explore the emerging issue areas and concerns in the coastal region of the state.*

Keywords: Urbanization, development, environmental, substandard, human's well-being, pollution, overcrowding, deforestation

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