

The New Indian Express 15.09.2010

Slum population to touch 19.4 lakh by 2017

BHUBANESWAR: As the State's urban areas are set to add a huge 32 lakh population over the 2001 population by 2017, the slums there would add massive five lakh more during the same period. This means the number of slums in these areas would witness a massive increase.

By 2017, the total slum population in Orissa has been projected at 19.4 lakh. The slum population will increase at the rate of 30,000 per annum in Orissa, according to the new estimate of the recently released Pranob Sen report.

Increased urbanisation leads to proliferation of slums. By that yardstick, the urbanisation in Orissa is not going to be faster than that of Chhattisgarh. But the State's slum population has a higher share of urban population vis-a-vis other states.

As per 2001 census, the slum population accounts for 25 per cent of the total urban population in the State. But the figures in Delhi and Gujarat are only 18 and 19 per cent. Even in Uttar Pradesh, the ratio is less than that of Orissa. The higher share shows higher slum population growth compared to urbanisation rate. This has led to the crumbling of labour market in rural areas. Growth in urban areas is mainly due to influx of rural migrants and in-situ growth. Census figures show in-situ growth is not abnormal here.

In rural areas, the labour market is dominated by agri-labourers. The shedding of labour by agriculture and lack of non-farm options make them migrate to urban areas.

As per the Pranob Sen report, total slum population was 14 lakh in 2001 census. But the slum census in 2001 was conducted in towns having 50,000 plus population. After the launch of Rajiv Awas Yojana, the Sen Committee has been set up to identify total slums in the states irrespective of population size.

The Registrar General of India, after technical simulations, has made an estimate of the slum

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Wednesday, 15 September 2010 10:10 - Last Updated Wednesday, 15 September 2010 10:14

population in towns having population between 20,000-50,000. The estimates for the second group of towns (20,000-50,000) shows slum population at 40,000-50,000 only. The 13.6 lakh slum population lives in towns with 50,000 plus population.

Of this, five major cities of Orissa - Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Berhampur, Puri, Sambalpur - together account for 8 lakh. The figures make it clear that most migrations are taking place to these cities.