
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

8987/11

Paper 1 Written paper

May/June 2014

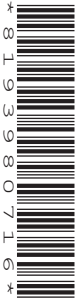
1 hour 30 minutes

RESOURCE BOOKLET

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Resource Booklet contains Documents 1 and 2 which you should use to answer the questions.

You should spend approximately 10 minutes reading the documents before attempting to answer the questions. This is allowed for within the time set for the examination.



This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

The documents below consider urbanisation and the countryside. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the question paper.

Document 1: adapted from 'Asia's mega problem', an article by Barun Roy published on the Indian news website *Business Standard*, in December 2011.

Governments must wake up to the impending doom of unplanned urbanisation.

These are hard facts and well known. Half the world's mega cities – 13 out of 27, with populations of over 10 million – are in Asia, as also are half of all its tier-II cities – 194 out of 387 – each with a million or more inhabitants. The region is urbanising at a speed that no other region in the world currently matches. By 2050, Asia will have 3.4 billion people living in its urban areas against the 1.7 billion now. But are the implications of these facts well understood by all Asian governments?

With cities and towns taking an overwhelming position as the prime movers of economies, and villages becoming increasingly peripheral in a rapidly urbanising landscape, the migration to cities of large numbers of people is no longer possible to stop. At an urban forum in Manila, Haruhiko Kuroda, President of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), said that about 80 per cent of Asia's wealth currently comes from its urban areas. No amount of romancing can lure people back to villages anymore, because livelihood opportunities have largely moved from there.

The purpose of the Manila forum was to draw the attention of Asia's governments, once again, to what awaits them if they don't get serious about their urban future: a ballooning of the squatter population, from 200 million now to nearly 700 million by 2015; a wider spread of urban poverty and squalor; worsening chaos on the streets; a breakdown of systems and services; falling quality of life; unhealthy congestion; scarcer water and electricity; and thicker levels of pollution.

Mega cities can't be contained, however much we seek to improve their liveability, efficiency and competitiveness, unless we develop tier-II urban centres with equal zeal and attention. In fact, the fate of these intermediate cities is perhaps of greater concern since they are the first ports of call for urban migrants and, left to neglect and chance, they can permanently disfigure a country's landscape and lead to its slumming.

For some countries, like Malaysia, transforming smaller cities is easier because sizes are small, the demographic pressure isn't high and gaps in living standards aren't gaping. For others, like India, where most of the lesser cities are chance-directed, chance-erected hell-holes, ugly to look at, dismal to live in and culturally-barren, the task is stupendous. ADB's Urban Operation Plan is, of course, a welcome move, and, as Kuroda suggested, the private sector can be asked to help in certain cases, but the imbalance of development is so big that private housing complexes and shopping malls alone can't fix it.

India has another important handicap: fragmented thinking. Even after 55 years of organised planning, development continues to be seen, both at the Centre and in states, as an affair to act when necessary and not something where vision, will and action are synchronised to perform like an orchestra. It's doubtful if the likely spending of trillions on infrastructure under the Twelfth Five-Year Plan is going to make a difference.

Document 2: adapted from 'Vietnam: Urban-rural divide could stunt progress', an article published in *The Financial Times*, a British newspaper, published in November 2011. The author is a journalist working in Hanoi.

Following the commencement of market-orientated reforms in 1986, Vietnam's economy has grown at an average of more than 7 per cent per year over the past two decades. This was helped by the signing of a bilateral trade agreement with the US in 2001 and entry into the World Trade Organisation in 2007.

Ho Chi Minh City has long been the country's commercial heartland and its key engine of growth. But, unlike many other countries in the region, Vietnam has benefited from a second major pole of growth. Hanoi, the capital city that lies more than 1,000 miles to the north, is another large business and industrial centre.

These "primate cities", as geographers have dubbed them, tend to suck in talented people, migrant workers, domestic capital and foreign investors – which leads to a concentration of strategic resources and creates big challenges for urban infrastructure. It also deprives the surrounding regions of such assets.

Vietnam's bipolar expansion has been more balanced, says Jamie Gillen, an assistant professor of cultural and urban geography at the National University of Singapore. But, while the prosperity of Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi has brought the benefits of economic transformation to both cities, Gillen warns, the increasing rural-urban divide "is potentially crippling for Vietnam".

About 60-70 per cent of Vietnam's 87 million people live and work in the countryside, where small-scale agriculture is the economic and social lifeblood. Apart from the two big urban areas, only a few cities can claim populations of more than one million people.

Although the impact of integration into the global economy is most visible in the big cities, where shops selling Prada handbags and jewel-encrusted Vertu smartphones sit alongside banners promoting Marxist-Leninist ideology, life has improved across the country.

But Edmund Malesky, a political scientist at the University of California, San Diego, argues that Vietnam actually has a more equitable redistribution of resources to rural areas than many other countries at a similar level of development. "Seven provinces account for 70 per cent of revenue, but only about 40 per cent of expenditures," he says. "More ends up reaching the lower [income] groups than happens in China."

But while the United Nations Development Programme and other aid donors trumpet Vietnam's impressive record of poverty reduction, they are becoming concerned about increasing disparities between the wealthy urbanised provinces and the rest.

While levels of human development in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and the third city of Danang are on par with China, poor rural provinces such as Ha Giang and Lai Chau are more comparable with Papua New Guinea.

Copyright Acknowledgements:

Document 1 © adapted: Barun Roy; *Asia's Mega Problem*; Business Standard; 1 December 2011.

Document 2 © adapted: Ben Bland; *Vietnam: Urban-Rural Divide Could Stunt Progress*; The Financial Times; 23 November 2011.

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