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The interest in urban in-migration springs from two fundamental concerns:

- i) the impact of such population redistribution on both the place of origin and the place of destination; and
- ii) the process of adjustment of the migrants to the new urban environment.

This paper attempts to address some of the issues and problems related to this phenomenon in the Malaysian context.

From the outset, it can be noted that the Malaysian experience has been one of rapid urban growth (in terms of the percentage change in urban population) but a slow pace of the urbanization (in terms of the percentage point change in the ratio of the urban population to total population). While urban population is estimated to have increased by about one and a half times between 1957 to 1980, the proportion of total population living in urban areas of 10,000 and above has increased from 27% to only 35% in the same period. (1) This is not to suggest though that the Malaysian case was unique.

"The truth is that neither by past standards nor by present ones is the rate of urbanization in Asia spectacular." (2)

Many people now consider the fear of massive rural-urban migration a chimera. Of the components of urban growth, a high rate of natural increase appears to have been significant. Even for the period 1975 - 1980, only one half of the annual urban growth rate of 4.6% was expected to be the result of rural-urban migration. (3)

The migration picture in Malaysia has been one of a significant amount of rural movement which has been mainly government-induced and a net migrational flow of a more autogenic nature from the smaller to the larger urban centres with a strong gravitational pull towards the Kuala Lumpur conurbation area where the bulk of modern sector development has been located. There has been a redistribution of population up the urban hierarchy with an increase in the proportion living in metropolitan towns. The eight metropolitan towns of Kuala Lumpur, Georgetown, Ipoh, Johore Bahru, Klang, Petaling Jaya, Malacca and Seremban have attracted more migrants than did all the 403 large (population of 10,000-75,000) and small (population of 1,000-10,000) towns together. (4) The migration into the Kuala Lumpur area alone has been estimated to increase the population by 6.6% or almost 30,000 persons per year. (5)

The problem then, is not one of a rapid rate of urban agglomeration or of mass rural-urban exodus. Rather, the case in Malaysia is that of an influx only into the metropolitan areas particularly the primate city while the growth of small towns on the whole has been slow. The concern with urban in-migration then is more correctly stated as a concern with imgration into the metropolitan cities with population redistribution i.e. from rural to urban areas and from small towns to the big cities. The distinction is significant from two angles:

- i) To the extent that migration occurs in a stepped manner from rural to small towns and eventually to larger centres, there is a "funnelling" effect - which reduces the pressure on the big cities;
- ii) Migrants directly from rural areas tend to exhibit different characteristics from those coming from small towns. One would expect that some form of acclimatization process would help migrants from small towns to better adjust to the new urban environment than migrants from rural areas.

This distinction on the basis of the place of origin of migrants coming into the cities will be maintained for examining the impact and adjustment of city in-migrants.

The phenomena of urbanization and particularly rural-urban migration, have received various explanations in economic theory. Urbanization is explained by the Western model which is based on the historical experience of industrialized countries in terms of migration from rural areas as the primary demographic process of adjustment to meet the demand for labour created by the concentration of economic progress through industrialization in the towns which themselves experience relatively low rates of **natural** increase. The applicability of this basic model of economically-induced urbanization to Third World countries has been much debated. But even the "over-urbanization" thesis (which recognizes that urbanization can occur independently of the growth of economic opportunities and that it is the lack of economic progress and poverty in the overcrowded **rural areas** that push people into rapidly growing cities) makes the same assumption that rapid urban growth must be accompanied by changes in the level of urbanization.

The Malaysian experience of rapid urban growth but a slow pace of urbanization in conjunction with significant economic growth does not conform to the pattern suggested by either model. While no complete explanation of the Malaysian experience is yet available, it is clear that the economic structure of the country and the pattern of socio-economic development would have had substantial impact. For example, the government's extensive rural development

and emphasis on frontier agricultural settlements could have significantly countered the attractions of moving into the towns. The strategy of redistributing population from overcrowded areas into new land schemes and increasing productivity and incomes for the insitu areas into new land schemes and increasing productivity and incomes for the insitu areas could have provided the rural people with a viable alternative to moving to the towns. While the operation of the "push" factors has been weakened by the improved conditions in the rural areas, the "pull" factors do not appear to have been so great either. It is certainly not that the lure of industrial employment opportunities has not been strong; economic factors will obviously loom large in any decision to move to the towns by rural dwellers beset by poverty and under-employment and attracted by the supposed earnings differential between the agricultural sector and the modern industrial sector. But what should be noted is that urban employment opportunities have not been sufficient to pull large numbers of the rural population to the towns and cities. In spite of being the fastest growing sector, the absolute number of jobs created in manufacturing has been relatively small because of the small initial base. The manufacturing sector created only 139,000 new jobs between 1975-1978, not all of which were located in towns and a significant proportion of which took in only located in towns and a significant proportion of which took in only women. Or perhaps, as noted in the Third Malaysia Plan, "the high level of skills required for employment has made it difficult for migrants from rural areas to find suitable occupations." (5) It could also be that the high rates of natural increase in the urban areas themselves have been an important source of the necessary labour for the growing modern-sector enterprises.

The explanation of past trends is not intended to imply though that the situation will not become more serious in the future. In as far the towns and cities serve as focal points for industrialization, technological change, the literacy explosion and rapid social development; and to the extent that the government is stepping up the absorption of Malays into urban activities, heavier movements from rural to urban areas can be anticipated.

The impacts of larger rural-urban population movements will be increasingly felt and will increasingly represent on the one hand, a serious pressure on urban resources and on the other, a major area of policy and planning considerations. Perhaps it would not be incorrect to state at this juncture that the impact of urban in-migration is being strongly felt in rural areas. In Malaysia, it is becoming increasingly clear that an excessive out-flow from rural areas can be a serious disintegrating force. In areas of major out-migration, mass exodus can literally emasculate communities and accelerate the economic obsolescence in several ways. Rural depopulation can be a particularly serious problem when we consider that out-migration usually draws away the more valuable and productive members of the labour force - the young, the more educated and the skilled, while

those left behind are generally the dependents - the very young, the old and the housewives who are under/unskilled. More and more evidence is now surfacing to show that the rice fields, the rubber holdings and the agricultural farms are becoming deprived of able-bodied young men. Approximately 2 million acres of agricultural land are now unproductive. (6) Labour shortage is increasingly being reported by the estates, big padi farmers and regional development schemes. And the situation is worsening as more and more young people flock to the towns.

The implications of rural depopulation are serious especially for an agricultural country like Malaysia. It must be remembered that for some years to come, Malaysia will remain an agricultural country but agricultural development plans will be disrupted if those most able to participate have left for other areas. Similarly, regional development and land schemes will have to be concerned about the number of potential settlers. Rural opportunities do not appear attractive any more. The impact could also be a regional entrenchment of pockets of people in poverty. Since migration tends to be selective both with respect to age and characteristics of the migrants, the more developed areas will attract the most dynamic individuals, stimulating the further development of the advanced areas, leaving the out-migration villages further behind in the development process and increasing existing imbalances.

In the urban areas themselves, the impact of in-migration will be most pronounced in the metropolitan centres where the growing population pressures will be most keenly felt. An aspect that has aroused strong concern is the effect of in-migration on urban unemployment. Unemployment rates are clearly much higher in urban areas (around 10%) than in rural areas (just above 5%). (7) That urban open unemployment rates have risen more rapidly than rural unemployment rates also appears symptomatic of the increasing pressure of job seekers in the urban areas. Some writers have claimed, though, that "nothing in the Malaysian data on migration supports the contention that unemployment in Malaysian cities was a direct of migration." (8) Another study found that urban in-migrants had an average unemployment rate of 25% or more below the average rate of the urban native-born. (9) But it must be acknowledged at least that the inflow of additional job seekers particularly if they were able to find jobs would in fact have deprived the native urban labour force of some opportunities and placed additional pressure on the urban areas. It should also be remembered that the migrant problem may be more serious than indicated by the rate of open unemployment among them if it was found that the migrants were going into subemployment in the urban traditional sector or the amount of return migration among those unable to find or "create" urban jobs was significant.

The employment situation in the metropolises can be elaborated upon. A sample survey in Kuala Lumpur revealed, for example, that besides the impoverished migrants from the rural or other urban areas there is also a well-to-do small urban to metropolitan migrant stream comprising professionals, semi-professionals and administrators, for many of whom mobility was allongenic e.g. due to transfers. (10) But the volume of this stream is small in comparison to those moving into the cities because of perceived preferences. Of the economically active migrants to the metropolitan areas, the most important occupational group is the "production worker" which comprises mostly labourers, construction workers and factory operators. The other two important groups are "Sales Workers" including small retailing businesses, travelling salesmen, hawkers, etc. and "service workers" such as taxi drivers, dhobbies, barbers, tailors etc. (11) From such an employment picture, it can be seen that a majority of in-migrants are engaged in jobs which are not only poorly paid but also often irregular. The problem restated then is that migration into metropolitan centres aggravates the proliferation of the lower-circuit activities involving the bulk of the urban population in the informal sector with low and irregular incomes, often only sufficient for subsistence existence.

Given such economic conditions, it is to be expected that most of these migrants would crowd the congested tenements of the inner city or resort to spontaneous settlements. Apart from the well-known problems of slums, squatters, air pollution and traffic congestion, there are political dangers inherent in the potential inter-ethnic competition and conflict in the demand for scarce resources, be they jobs, housing, health or education.

The impact of in-migration especially into metropolitan centres discussed above is partly a function of how well and how fast these migrants adjust to the new environment. It has generally been recognized that the nature and the magnitude of the urban problem will to some extent depend on the process of economic, social, demographic and cultural adjustment or adaptation of the in-migrants on the one hand, and on the accommodation or integration or assimilation of these people into the urban frame work on the other. Available literature on cityward migration in developing countries suggests that the migrants' adjustment to city life can be a problematic process and that this process is made more difficult by two basic problems - that of obtaining suitable and remunerative jobs and of finding accommodation. Research done in Malaysia can be summarized to give some idea of the extent to which cityward migrants adjust and of the form the adjustment takes.

The effects of in-migration on employment/unemployment have been touched upon. In terms of adjustment or adaptation, the data suggest that those coming from small towns rather than migrants from the agricultural sector are more inclined towards being shopkeepers, retailers, small-time proprietors, hawkers and the like because of the more or less similar environment of their origin areas. (12) This finding linked with the earlier observation of the small stream of professionals, semi-professionals and administrators from the

smaller urban centres would suggest that urban origin migrants tend to be better educated, have higher socio-economic status and that their economic adjustment to the city is easier and faster than that of migrants from rural origins. In general though, it has been noted that a very high proportion of economically active migrants whether from rural or urban origins have already found some form of employment at the time of migration, or are able to find jobs in a relatively short space of time. (13) But for those who seek modern sector jobs, the wait may be a long one. It has been estimated that the urban traditional sector keeps expanding with new migrants having to wait 1-3 years to get a job. (14) Under such conditions, involvement in illegal or morally degrading activities leading to various other social aberrations can be expected to increase.

For those who go into factory work (and this would cover a majority of rural migrants), the conditions of employment still leave much to be desired. Earnings of between \$200-\$300 per month would put these workers among the lowest paid by urban income standards. There appears to be a low degree of satisfaction with and commitment to urban factory jobs. A survey conducted among factory girls in the Kuala Lumpur area earlier this year revealed that a large proportion took up factory jobs because these jobs were readily available rather than intrinsically desirable in themselves. A majority of respondents reported difficulties adjusting to their jobs. Particularly for those from rural areas, the work regime, shift duties, technical/mechanical operations, work relationships with their superiors etc. in the industrial environment represent great contrasts from what they were used to. A high turnover rate has often been noted and although this may be related to a search for better prospects elsewhere, it may also suggest an inability to adapt to the demands of modern industrial and urban conditions. (15)

The contention that migrants from urban places generally enter the city at a higher socio-economic status and are therefore better placed in terms of jobs applies also to the housing problem. If nothing else, coming from poorer backgrounds, rural migrants are more ready to accept sub-standard accommodation than urban migrants. Other studies have also shown that migrants who arrive in the city with higher status are usually able to acquire temporary housing problem. If nothing else, coming from poorer backgrounds, rural migrants are more ready to accept sub-standard accommodation than urban migrants. Other studies have also shown that migrants who arrive in the city with higher status are usually able to acquire temporary housing in a shorter space of time. But the most apparent fact is that the continuous flood of migrants make it difficult for the city to accommodate all of these migrants with its available facilities. The result is a proliferation of slum and squatter settlements. In the Federal Territory alone it is estimated that there are some 300,000 squatters occupying valuable land and hampering the implementation of development projects. (16) A high degree of overcrowding is another indication of the seriousness of the problem.

It is not uncommon to find more than 15 occupants in a small house with three rooms (17) or more than five people sharing a single room. (18) It is true that for many of the migrants from the rural areas, the amenities enjoyed like piped water and electricity do represent an improvement from the rural villanges. But, on the one hand, the large absolute number of rural migrants in the slum or squatter areas can make possible the continuation of certain non-urban practices within the city, hence the observation that such migrants seem "to be in, but not of, the city." (19) Such migrants tend to be cut off from the modernizing influence of urban life; and with the reduced need for urban adjustment because of the relative encapsulation within slum or squatter areas, the danger is that these migrants may be transferring rural problems to an urban environment. On the other hand, under conditions of overcrowded housing space and meagre household amenities and fired by the taste of independence, many young migrants spend most of their leisure time outside their homes making them more vulnerable to the less salubrious aspects of urban life, e.g. the dadah menace.

Finally, the social-psychological problems of adjustment carry important implications. Some writers have noted that while it is true that there are far more opportunities in the city, the fact of their class position and the corresponding low social status not unusually prevents rural migrants into the cities from taking advantage of these opportunities. While it has to be admitted that some will indeed experience an improvement in their impoverished lives, such minimal upward shift still does not compare favourably with the status of the majority of city natives. (20) Where rural migrants are unable to cope with the various pressures stemming from the experience of urban living, they are likely to adopt a somewhat deviate from of behaviour. (21)

The low social status assigned to some of these migrants particularly to female rural migrants working in factories has been observed to pose a serious handicap to these girls. There have been reports that the urban community looks down on them because of their rural background, low pay, poor living conditions and rumours of immoral behaviour. (22) Frequent occurrences of mass hysteria in factories and cases of illegitimate pregnancies and illegal abortions are interpreted as symptoms that the pressures and tensions of urban work and living are sometimes too much for these girls to cope with.

The policy implications emerging from the issues discussed are many. Among the obvious implications is the need for the government to play a more active role in reducing and guiding the flow of cityward migration. Recognizing that from the individual migrant's point of view movement entails an improvement, and that to halt urban immigration completely is neither desirable nor feasible, the task at hand appears to be the need to use policy instruments that will achieve a population redistribution that fulfils the demands of both urban industry and commercial-based sectors and the rural agricultural

sector and that will contribute towards the aim of a more balanced social and economic development of the country as a whole. A whole gamut of policies can be considered ranging from promoting the establishment of new growth centres and the more dynamic growth of small towns which will help to intercept the flow out of rural areas and relieve pressure on the metropolis; to slowing down natural increase both in rural and urban areas; to improving and modernizing the socio-economic conditions in rural areas to reduce rural-urban differentials and to improve not only rural work opportunities but also the "meaningfulness" of rural jobs; to setting up welfare and counselling centres in the cities to help migrants in their various adjustment problems.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) See Cheong Kee Check, Lim Lin Lean, Paul Chan, "Interactions between Population and Socio-Economic Development" (forthcoming).
- (2) K. Davis, "Asian Cities: Problems and Prospects", Population and Development Review, 1975. p. 73.
- (3) Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980. Kuala Lumpur: Government Press, 1976. p. 149.
- (4) Gavin Jones and Manjit S. Sidhu, "Population Mobility in Peninsular Malaysia" in Development Forum, Vol. IX No. 2, December 1979, p. 4.
- (5) Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980. op.cit. p. 149.
- (6) Dr. Mohd. Nor bin Abdul Ghani, "Discouraging Rural to Urban Migration of the Youths in Malaysia" in Development Forum Vol. IX No. 2, December 1979, p. 61.
- (7) Third Malaysia Plan 1976-1980. op.cit. p. 97.
- (8) R. Chander and H. Singh, "Internal Migration and Its Role in National Development". Paper presented at the Fourth Malaysian Economic Convention. Kuala Lumpur: May 1977. p. 44.
- (9) Soon LeeYing, An Economic Analysis of Internal Migration in West Malaysia with special reference to Economic Imbalances and Regional Development." Unpublished M.Ec. thesis submitted to the University of Malaya, 1974. pp 187 and 196.
- (10) R.J. Pryor, "Malaysia: A Demographic Analysis of Internal Migrants" in R.J. Pryor (ed.), Migration and Development in South-East Asia. A Demographic Perspective. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press 1979. p. 110.
- (11) Lee Boon Thong, "Small Town Migration to Metropolitan Centres: A Case in Peninsular Malaysia" in Development Forum Vol. IX No. 2, December 1979, p. 56.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) A recent survey conducted in Shah Alam indicated that most workers were able to secure employment in less than four months. See Socio-Economic Research and General Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department and Ministry of Health, A Socio-Economic and Health Survey Report of Industrial Workers in Shah Alam. Kuala Lumpur: (undated).p. 23.
- (14) Dr. Mohd. Nor bin Abdul Ghani, op.cit.p. 65.

- (15) Jamilah Ariffin, "Rural-Urban Migration and the Status of Factory Women Workers in a developing society: A Case Study of Peninsular Malaysia". Paper presented at the 1978 Conference of the Sociological Association of Australia and New Zealand, May 1978. p. 16.
- (16) Dr. Mohd. Nor bin Abdul Ghani, op.cit. pp 64-65.
- (17) Jamilah Ariffin, op.cit. p. 15.
- (18) Preliminary data from the HAWA survey.
- (19) Penporn Tirasawat, "Urbanization and Migrant Adjustment in Thailand". SEAPRAP Research Report No. 10, June 1977. p. 2.
- (20) Abdul Halim Ali, "The Adaptation of Rural Migrants in Rural Factory Employment - A Case of A Malaysian Factory". Occasional Research Paper No. 3. Jabatan Antropologi & Sociologi Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, March 1980. p. 4.
- (21) Philip Hauser, "Problems of Rapid Urbanization" in Wersley, P. (ed.) Problems of Modern Society. London: Penguin Books 1972 pp. 139-147.
- (22) Jamilah Ariffin, op.cit. p. 17.
