ABSTRACT

The aim of this academic exercise is to study the urban population growth in West Malaysia in the intercensal period 1957—1970. The term urban is here defined as all gazetted administrative areas with a population of 5000 or over.

The pace of urban population growth in 1957-70 was relatively slower as compared with the previous intercensal period 1947-1957. This was mainly due to the fact that in the period between 1957-70, there was no execution of Emergency Ordinance which actually caused a large volume of rural-urban migration in the years 1947-57. Besides, the fertility rates of urban area had declined considerably since 1957. Nevertheless, the rate of urban population growth is still one and a half times faster than that of the rural population growth rate.

With highest urban birth rate and greatest volume of rural-urban migration, among the three main ethnic groups, the Malays had recorded the fastest rate of urbanization in the last intercensal period. Among the chief factors contributing to a greater volume of Malay rural-urban migration were the unabating rise of nationalism since the end of World War II, improvement of educational level, development of transport and communication, the implementation of Rural Development Schemes, and the relative deprivation in the rural areas. With the implementation of government policy to speed up the urbanization process of the Malays since May, 13 1969 the urbanization differential between the Malays and Chinese will be more rapidly improved in the years ahead.
Natural population increase accounted for more than half of the population growth in 1957-70, while the expansion of urban territories was playing a secondary role. Such a pattern of factorial increase supported the assertion of Kingsley Davis that the present urban growth in contemporary developing countries is mainly due to natural increase.

Though by Southeast Asian standard, the urbanization level in West Malaysia is high, yet its urbanization process bears no positive correlation with the pace of industrialization. Thus as a result of rapid urbanization, heavy strains are placed on urban social amenities and infra-structure as reflected in traffic congestion, over-crowding, unemployment and under employment, the inflation of marginal workers such as peddlers and hawkers, and the deterioration of slums and proliferation of squatters. Above all the competition for limited jobs available among the various ethnic groups, particularly between the Chinese and the Malays, has become more and more acute with its attendant consequences that no responsible government aiming at creating a harmonics and integrated society can afford to ignore.