

ii. Adoption of PURA

Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas [PURA] is a scheme to enhance physical, knowledge, economic, social and electronic connectivities, of the rural areas starting with the construction of ring roads to link a loop of villages. Hon'ble President Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's architectural finesse is behind the conception, formulation and implementation of PURA nationwide.

PURA starts with four steps :

- acquiring land for constructing a ring road (now itself enough land for future expansion too);
- the construction of a good quality ring road about 30 km long to link a loop of villages;
- constructing an equally good quality link road to a nearby large city, and
- running frequent and fast bus services on both the ring road and the link road.

Under physical connectivity, a group of 15-25 villages will be linked to one another by road. There will also be a ring road accessible to each village. Besides roads, provision for electricity and transport facilities have also been included. Digital connectivity will mean linking villages with modern telecommunication and information technology services. Knowledge connectivity would mean establishing every 5-7 km of the ring road a school, a higher education centre and a hospital. Economic connectivity aims to establish within this Group of villages, good marketing facilities so that all the commodities and services of daily use can be produced and sold in these markets.

Depending on the region and the state of present development, PURA can be classified into three different categories- type A, B and C clusters. The characteristics of these types are :

Type A cluster - situated close to an urban area having minimal road connectivity, limited infrastructure, limited support, school, primary health centre;

Type B cluster - also situated close to an urban area but has sparsely spread infrastructure and no connectivity;

Type C cluster - located far interior with no infrastructure, no connectivity and no basic amenities. Broad outlines of PURA are given in Exhibit -2.

In the context of Assam, PURA offers an opportunity to develop rural sector through social and technological interventions. It also envisages development of various enterprises both in the manufacturing and services sectors once the physical connectivity is in place. Using PURA, rural tourism can be developed as a revenue earner for the State. In a number of states, rural tourism is being encouraged in the private sector attracting large number of tourists both from within India and abroad. Countries like Singapore, Malaysia etc., have been thriving on the flow of international tourists. This will improve the economic well-being of the rural people in Assam. PURA also would stimulate private investment over time in other sectors leading to overall development of the state.

Recognising the potential of PURA, the GoA has already initiated steps to pilot a PURA in Rangia town, Kamrup district. NABARD is in dialogue with AMTRON, agency engaged in developing the project under the directions of the Department of Panchayats and Rural

Development. NABARD would join hands in facilitating smooth implementation of PURA in Assam.

For Assam, one block in each district can be identified and a plan of action developed for implementing the PURA. While identifying the areas, the presence of good working people's organizations like SHGs, FMCs, Farmers Clubs, etc., may be kept in view as this would help in creating a sense of ownership and commitment for the common good of the rural people.