

23pc of total population live in urban areas

The figure likely to reach 40pc in 2020

UNB, Dhaka

About 50 per cent of the country's total population will be living in urban areas in 2035 while the urban population is likely to hit 40 per cent in 2020, making it harder for the government to catch up in the race to provide civic amenities.

Some three crore people or 23 per cent of the country's total population are now living in cities and towns, and the rate of urbanisation in Bangladesh is 25 per cent, which is much lower than many countries.

The statistics were revealed in a paper released on the occasion of World Habitat Day. Prof Amirul Islam Chowdhury, a teacher of Economics Department of Jahangirnagar University, prepared the paper.

Although a large number of people in Bangladesh are now living in urban areas, they are being deprived of basic civic amenities.

The survey showed that economic activities in urban areas of the country had risen to 43 per cent, but still there was 50 per cent deficit in utility services for the city and town dwellers.

It said 40 per cent of urban dwellers were living below the poverty line while 35-50 per cent living in slums hardly get facilities like water and sanitation.

Another survey said that by the year 2020 there would be a need to raise employment opportunities by 23-30 per cent every year in the formal sector and 5-7 per cent in the informal sector.

As there is no possibility of creating employment opportunities in the formal sector at this rate, there will be tremendous pressure on the informal sector, the paper said.

There are 522 small and big urban centres in Bangladesh and of them six are city corporations. Even though the revenue earning of the urban authorities rose by 20 per cent in the last 20 years, it's still only one per cent of the national income, the survey said.

RAJUK, which is responsible for the planned development of capital Dhaka, in its master plan decided to expand the city area by 590 sq. mile by 2015.

As per the plan, the city will be expanded up to Gazipur municipality in the north, up to the Dhaleswari river in the south, up to the Shitalakha and Meghna rivers in the west and up to the Dhaleswari river in the east.

To implement its master plan that began in 1995, RAJUK has taken up a 20-year long-term infrastructure plan, which will be completed in 2015. A mid-term urban area plan will be implemented by the year 2005.

To build up a planned capital, RAJUK is implementing a detailed area plan, which is now nearing completion. The areas are north-east Mirpur to Uttara, Kamrangirchar, Keraniganj, adjacent areas of Begunbari canal, northern side of DND and the proposed by-pass from Airport to Demra and its adjacent areas.

Under Dhaka Metropolitan

Development Plan, RAJUK has also taken up projects to construct some new roads and expand some existing ones, construct residential buildings, develop residential, commercial and industrial plots, and preserve water bodies and lakes.

To ease the city's traffic jam, construction of 10 link roads is under process. Those are Dayaganj-Jurain link road, 100-foot and 60-foot wide roads at Senpara Parbata, 60-foot wide link road from Star Gate to Notre Dame College and a road from Malibagh crossing to Janapath.

A road linking Gulshan-1 crossing to Progoti Swarni, Tongi Diversion road up to Progoti Swarni, another road with rail-tracks from Malibagh level crossing to Tejgaon railway station are also among the proposed roads.

RAJUK has also undertaken some projects to build up planned residential areas such as Purbachal new model town and Jhilmil residential project.

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The Bangladesh Paribash Andolon staged a demonstration in the city yesterday protesting adulteration of foods.

Free primary edn programme 5.5 cr textbooks to be distributed

BSS, Dhaka

The government will distribute about 5.52 crore textbooks among pupils under the Compulsory Free Primary Education Programme (CFPEP), education ministry officials said.

They said printing of the books for classes up to five was underway. The books would be distributed at the beginning of the next academic year.

The Primary and Mass Education Department sources said the government distributed 5.52 crore books at the beginning of current academic year. Eight textbooks were revised over the period.

The government has already brought some changes in the book distribution policy.

Under the revised policy, books will be distributed among the students of primary schools run by Khulna City Corporation, SOS Shishu Palli and Cantonment School and Geneva Camp Primary School and Pratibandhi Schools free of charges from the next academic year.

Besides, the government has launched a stipend project involving Tk 663 crore for the students of all schools outside pourasabha areas from the current fiscal to make the CFPEP a success.

Under the stipend project, each of the families with a school-going student will get Tk one hundred and each of the families with two such students will get Tk 125 as stipend.

US embassy closed on Oct 13, 15

UNB, Dhaka

The US Embassy offices will remain closed on October 13 and 15 on the occasion of Columbus Day and Durga Puja.

The American Embassy offices, including its Public Affairs Section, Information Resource Centre and the student counselling service, will remain closed on Sunday on the occasion of Columbus Day, an American national holiday, and on Tuesday due to Durga Puja.

Congratulations LUCKY PARENTS Alim-Al-Rabby and Nasreen Ferdousi Long live the new born son - Happy Colleagues

Money spent on smoking can save lives of 350 children a day: Study

BSS, Dhaka

The money spent by a typical male smoker in Bangladesh is five times higher than his expenditure on housing, 18 times higher than what he spends on healthcare, and 20 times higher than what he allocates for education.

Women in Bangladesh who smoke hukkas spend almost as much on tobacco as the per capita expenditure for housing, and over three times as much as per capita expenditure on healthcare and education, according to a study by PATH Canada, a Canada-based organisation.

The study on "Economic impact of tobacco on poor in Bangladesh" said 10.5 million fewer children would go hungry and 350 deaths of under-five children from malnutrition can be prevented each day, if the country decides not to consume tobacco.

Besides, the study said, the country could save 15 million dollars in foreign currency spent to import tobacco every year, increase employment in formal sector by 18 per cent and largely increase investments in housing, education and healthcare.

The study quoted World Bank that "a net gain to jobs of as much as 18 per cent if smokers spent their money on other goods and services."

"What is unique about tobacco

is not its ability to generate employment, but rather its ability to kill its users," it commented.

The study ruled out the possibility of a negative impact of sharp decline of the use of tobacco, saying the economy would not suffer, as when people stop consuming tobacco, their savings would not disappear from the economy.

Rather, they may spend the money on other items that involve labour in their production, transportation and sale.

"Tobacco is not a major agricultural crop in Bangladesh, and thus decreasing production would not likely to affect people, particularly given economic viability of alternative crops," the study said.

JU vacation begins today

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahangirnagar University (JU) goes on an 11-day vacation today on the occasion of Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja and Shab-e-Barat, says a press release.

However, semester final, year final and other examinations will be held during the vacation as per schedule.

University offices will remain closed only on October 14, 15, 20 and 22, the release added.

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