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I discussed the issue of Dhaka's transportation in a recent article in *The Daily Star* (Fixing Dhaka, Feb. 4). In this article I will discuss the issue of Dhaka's growth options beyond the DMDP (Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan) area and the rationales for the creation of new satellite towns.

The two issues of urban transportation and growth are intricately linked and intertwined. If you have urban growth, both within and outside, you need a proper transport system. Dhaka is currently growing, both inside through densification as well growth in its outer fringe areas. But the growth of Dhaka is not limited to such areas only. Being the heart of Bangladesh's growth, Dhaka is sprouting and pulling growth to its adjoining areas that are beyond the DMDP Dhaka 1995-2015 plan.

Growth of Dhaka

DMDP area is currently growing at the rate of 4.33 per cent per year. Over the next twenty years, this is expected to slow down to a level of 3.43 per cent per year. But numerically the total growth numbers in Dhaka and the adjoining areas will continue to increase dramatically.

The STP (Strategic Transport Plan) Dhaka (2004-2024) studies put the population of Dhaka (DMDP area) in 2024 at 19.83 million and the population of Dhaka plus Gazipur, Manikganj, Munishiganj, and Narshingdi at 35.93 million. By 2031, the population of Dhaka would exceed 25 million and that of Greater Dhaka area near 40 million. So there is definitely a reason for managing the growth of Dhaka and this area.

Managing the growth of Dhaka calls for decentralising and slowing down the growth of Dhaka (DMDP area) proper. This means promoting alternative growth and directing them to other specific locations. This approach to urban growth management calls for moving much of the growth to adjoining new satellite towns. This approach has been successfully tried in a number of major growing urban areas, such as the greater Tokyo region, Seoul in South Korea, and is also being practiced in Mumbai, India.

Housing, Land and Environment

Growth in Dhaka relates directly to housing. Who has it, who gets it, who does not, and where and in what forms it ends up. Housing in undeveloped areas has led the growth of Dhaka. To understand the growth of Dhaka, one has to understand the phenomenon of housing in and around Dhaka.

Researching housing and growth in Dhaka, one thing that stands out is that there is a perennial shortage of all forms of housing, particularly for those at the lower end of the income scale. While Dhaka grows rapidly, it is people at the upper income end who are mostly the beneficiariesof this sector, both in quantities as well as grabbing most of the urban and rural lands in and around Dhaka.

For example, while at the bottom end of the housing spectrum, 3.8 million squatters and slum dwellers live on only 4 per cent of Dhaka's land, the land occupied by the (minority) upper income group exceeds 30 per cent.

The statistics point out a dangerous trend: the share of land occupation at the bottom end is gradually shrinking while their actual population is increasing. This is mostly because of the dynamics of low-income migration from the rural areas seeking jobs in the city.