

RETHINKING URBAN SPACES DHAKA AND BEYOND



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Mega projects and our hopes and concerns

Need for consensus and long-term planning



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Recently, two facts drew our attention in the context of our overall national economic development—the first one is that our growth rate is now well over 7 percent and is one of the highest in the world at present. The second one is that Bangladesh has fulfilled all the conditions to come out of LDC status. And these developments are happening even without the contribution of the so called *mega projects*. *Mega project* has been a much hyped phrase for the last few years. This is so because the people of Bangladesh are seeing the present government undertaking different development projects that cost large amounts of money. A few examples



While the present government has been bold to undertake these mega projects, the way these are being implemented and its future consequences need further thinking.

of such projects are The Padma Multipurpose Bridge (Tk 30,000 cr.), Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (Tk 101,000 cr.), Karnaphuli Tunnel (Tk

5600 cr.), Matarbari Power Plant (Tk 50,000 cr.), Rampal Power Station (Tk 16,000 cr.), Payra Power Plant (Tk 16,000 cr.), Dhaka Metro Rail

Project (Tk 22,000 cr.), Payra Deep Sea Port (Tk 160,000 cr.) etc. Another notable project is the Bangabandhu Satellite-1 (Tk 2000

cr.). It may be observed that most of the projects mentioned above fall into either the development of the energy sector or the transportation sector. Of these, only the Padma Bridge is being fully funded by the Bangladesh Government. For all of the remaining projects, the government is relying mostly on foreign aid or loan. Japan, Russia, China and India are the primary sources of funds for the projects. Here, I would like to briefly discuss a few issues, not as a technical person but as a general citizen.

While the present government has been bold to undertake these mega projects, the way these are being implemented and its future consequences need further thinking. In a democratic environment, people's opinion and participation in the development activities is essential right from the beginning. Conducting a public hearing before undertaking a project is practiced in developed countries to get a first-hand idea of the public feeling about a project. The foundation for a successful project starts much before the project commences. Such public meetings bring diverse groups of stakeholders together for

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