

RETHINKING URBAN SPACES DHAKA AND BEYOND



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Urbanisation trends and sustainable transport

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improve energy security and achieve the SDGs. In developing countries, although transport's share of GHG emissions is low, the energy consumption within the transport sector, especially the road transport, is growing much faster than in other sectors. With the threats of

transportation sector, especially urban transport will face unprecedented challenges related to demographics, motorisation, rapid urbanisation and sprawl, congestion, emissions, increasing number of aging transport infrastructure and growth in fuel demand in days ahead. Today the global transport sector consumes about 25

percent and 130 percent above today's level, which will account for more than one third of global energy supplies and more than half of all oil produced. Most of this demand will come from regions undergoing strong economic and population growth (WEC, 2011). Transport is the second largest source of GHG emissions (23 percent) after the energy sector; road transport at a global level accounts for over 70 percent of emissions, aviation for 12 percent, sea and inland waterways together comprise 11 percent, and railways (freight and passenger) only two percent of total emissions (WB, 2007). The transport sector, particularly the urban transport is going to encounter profound challenges about the advances in transportation, technological innovations and solutions in the days ahead, and how these may be able to satisfy the additional transport demands for about six billion urban people by 2050 at the lowest possible social cost without compromising the environment. In this connection, government policies may play a very critical role in defining the most likely pathway into the future.

Transport sector developments in Bangladesh have been driven mostly by unrehearsed considerations having no specific focus on future requirements. Despite the substantial expansion of the transport infrastructure since independence in 1971, albeit mostly in the road sector, the services provided to users have not kept up with the demand in terms of economy, quality and safety. The relative roles of transport modes evolved with road transport development at the cost of railways and inland water transport. Expanding the road network has apparently generated some direct benefits both in terms of economic growth and poverty alleviation, but this energy intensive mode of transport, in a country like

Bangladesh where the population density is very high and there is a limited supply of land, has created unbalanced development of the sector resulting the additional costs of economy and environment for long term perspective. The unplanned rapid urbanisation and motorisation has been a key cause of numerous transport related problems in Dhaka. Facing these challenges demand re-examining government policies and priorities to develop a strategy which allows for a sustainable contribution of the transport sector to the national development objectives, because transport not only plays a key role in the daily functioning of our lives but can also be a tool for managing growth and development.

Bangladesh is a fast urbanising country where the urban base has expanded rapidly from 7.6 percent to nearly 25.0 percent between 1970 and 2005. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has witnessed an extraordinary social and economic development since its independence, and the trend is expected to continue. It alone provides 35 percent to the country's total GDP. But unplanned urbanisation, especially poor transportation planning and lower land utilisation efficiency, has turned the city into a dirty, hazardous and demeaning place for living. Dhaka has already received the dubious distinction of being the second dirtiest city in the world (Forbes, 2008). At the same time, it is consistently ranked as one of the world's least liveable city. Dhaka has ranked the second on a global list of cities with worst air pollution (HEI, 2017). Dhaka is the 7th most stressed city in the world and the most stressed city in Asia for being densely populated and having the worst traffic congestion (Zipjet, 2017). A Buet study shows that pedestrians make up approximately 72

percent of road fatalities, 45 percent of casualties and are involved in about 48 percent of all reported accidents in Dhaka City. Although Dhaka's area is less than one percent of the country's total land area, it supports about 10 percent of the total population and 30 percent of the total urban population. There is hardly any other city in Asia that has grown (in terms of population and area) as rapidly and has changed its "face" as dramatically as Dhaka. During the last four decades, Dhaka has recorded a phenomenal growth in terms of population and area. The city is presently one of the 10th largest megacities of the world with a population of about 16.0 million, having the highest population density and an alarming growth rate. The rapid rise in population along with increased and versatile urban land use patterns has generated considerable travel demands as well as numerous transport problems in Dhaka, which has resulted in deterioration in accessibility, level of service, safety, comfort, operational efficiency and the urban environment. The additional population and ongoing urbanisation trends will add new dimensions to the urban fabric of Dhaka in the coming years.

The transportation system of the mega city is predominantly road based and non-motorised transport (mainly rickshaws) has a substantial share. Its transport environment is characterised by mixed-modes of transports (both motorised and non-motorised) using the same road space, mismanagement, conflict of jurisdictions and poor coordination among various authorities and agencies, which lead to intolerable and horrific traffic congestion, erratic delays and increasing environmental problems. Though Dhaka is one of the least motorised cities in the world, its

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Speed and scale of urbanisation brings challenges, including meeting accelerated demands for affordable housing.

PHOTO: STAR

increasing GHG emissions and the historical trends of volatile fuel prices, issues of affordability, environmental sustainability and resource optimisation are becoming increasingly important for selecting sustainable modes of transport especially in large developing cities of the world.

It is apparent that the global

percent of global energy supplies, of which 77 percent is by road transport, 10 percent each by marine and aviation, while the railways accounts for only three percent (EIA, 2016 and WEC, 2011). Driven by increases in all travel modes by 2050, the energy consumption of the transport sector is estimated to increase by between 80

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