

## No growth without planned urbanisation

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### GOVERNANCE, PLANNING FAILURES, AND THE PATH FORWARD

First, unlike China, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, and other major developing countries, Bangladesh does not yet have a national urban policy. The National Urban Policy Draft was prepared following extensive consultations over several years and presented to the Cabinet in 2013, but remained unapproved. While Five-year plans dedicate a section to urban development, they are essentially statements of intent and laudable goals. They do not identify policies and instruments to implement these goals.

Related to this is the virtual absence of planning. By definition, urban development is replete with "market failures" caused by large-scale investment requirements and the presence of "externalities" arising from population and economic density: i.e., actions of individuals and firms - e.g., those that create waste and pollution - affect not only themselves but also their neighbors, neighborhoods, and the whole city. Then "complementarities" create coordination problems: factories and jobs, marketplaces, transport and power, water and sanitation facilities, housing, schools, hospitals, parks, and other amenities must be provided together. Hence, sound planning is essential for the provision, valuation, allocation, and zoning of serviced land, as well as financing for all these activities.

The failure of our planning is evident from the histories of the Dhaka and Chittagong municipalities. While both were incorporated in the 1860s, Dhaka is the only city that has a centralized - though still partial - sewerage system. In Chattogram, wastewater is discharged into septic tanks and subsequently channeled untreated into water bodies, rivers, and the Bay of Bengal. Similarly, only a minuscule fraction of the 2,289 tons of solid waste generated in Chittagong is recycled.

Even when plans are prepared, implementation can fail spectacularly, as evidenced by the construction of an underutilized expressway over the main CDA Avenue, which expressly violates



Without well-planned urbanisation, the sprawl of our cities becomes a barrier to growth rather than an engine for it.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

the Chattogram Master Plan and ruins the city's main avenue. The view outside the main cities is, predictably, dismal. According to the LGRD data, while two other cities and 256 Paurasabha/Municipality Master Plans had been prepared, only five had been gazetted. These five twenty-year plans, covering 2011-2031, were approved 5 to 7 years after preparation, essentially dead on arrival. Not surprisingly, cities and towns are starved of public spaces and playing grounds far below the recommendations of the WHO.

Finally, there is the matter of fragmented governance in cities and towns, as well as weak city and municipal governments. The problem starts from the top. Again, unlike in most other advanced and developing countries, urban development responsibility is

not vested in a single ministry but in two: Housing and Public Works and the LGRD. Management of roads, water, housing, health and sanitation, and public works lacks coordination at the top. In addition, there are other agencies, such as the Electricity Supply Authority, the Roads and Highways Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges, and the Ministries of Health and Education, that operate under vertical supervision without local coordination in cities and towns. Finally, not least, the Ministry of Land also has a say regarding land acquisition.

City corporations' governance is fragmented into three parts: the Mayor's office, the city development authority, and the city and district administrative authorities. In the case of the smaller city corporations,

the situation is the same, except that there are no development authorities. In principle, there is a coordination committee chaired by the Mayor. However, in practice, the development authority and Deputy Commissioner's offices send low-level representatives to the committee and largely ignore it. The Deputy Commissioner is nominally responsible for coordinating the vertically directed activities of more than 40 line ministries and government agencies.

Unsurprisingly, chaos rules in building construction, traffic and transportation, water supply, and drainage. Sustainable growth and employment supporting urban development cannot take place under these conditions.

The solution lies in unifying urban

governance and planning under the office of the Mayor of cities and municipalities, who are accountable to the people, elected by them. At present, their budgets and their technical capacity are minuscule. The best estimate for the 12 city corporations is that their budgets are about 0.7 per cent of their GDP, compared with 6 per cent in Delhi and about 10 per cent in Ho Chi Minh City. However, one will also need to provide technical and financial management capacity to city governments in a coordinated manner under a single Ministry. Finally, the performance of city and municipal governments must be transparently monitored by both the Central Government and citizens' organizations.

বাংলাদেশ  
সরকারকে  
ধন্যবাদ



সরকারি  
সব ভাতা ও উপবৃত্তি  
সব সময়ই আসে  
নগদে



বিধবাদের সাদা শাড়ি পরতে হয়- এই প্রচলিত নিয়মের মধ্যেও, মিত্তর ইচ্ছে করে পছন্দের অন্য কোনো রঙের কাপড় পরতে। এখন তিনি সরকারের দেওয়া বিধবা ভাতা পাচ্ছেন নিজের নগদ একাউন্টে। সেই টাকা দিয়েই তিনি তাঁর ছোট ছোট ইচ্ছাপূরণ করছেন।



৭০ বছর বয়সে, জাকির হাসানের হাঁটা-চলার সহায় লাঠি। সরকারের দেওয়া বয়স্ক ভাতা আনতে, এখন আর লাঠিতে ভর দিয়ে তাঁকে কোথাও যেতে হয় না। নিজের নগদ একাউন্টেই ভাতা পাচ্ছেন নিরাপদে।



পড়াশোনার পাশাপাশি সাবিহা'র আঁকাআঁকির ব্যাপারে আগ্রহ অনেক বেশি। সরকারের দেওয়া উপবৃত্তির টাকা চলে আসে সাবিহা'র মায়ের নগদ একাউন্টে। সেই টাকা দিয়েই পূরণ হচ্ছে সাবিহার আঁকাআঁকি সহ আরো অনেক স্বপ্ন।



গিয়াস উদ্দিন মা হারানোর পর, এই জ্রাচে ভর দিয়েই চলাফেরা করেন। সরকারের দেওয়া প্রতিবন্ধী ভাতা আনতে, তাঁকে এখন আর কষ্ট করে কোথাও যেতে হয় না। নিজের নগদ একাউন্টে ভাতা পাচ্ছেন খুব সহজে।