

Getting urbanisation right

Experts say focus should be on developing secondary cities rather than Dhaka, Ctg



FILE PHOTO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Given that Bangladesh has gone through unstructured and imbalanced urbanisation over the past decades, experts said it will harm the country's economy if measures are not taken in this regard.

To retain growth, developing balanced urbanisation is a must in the country's northern part, as many people will migrate due to climate change in future. Experts also underscored the need for improvement of road connectivity to bring a balance in urbanisation and trade diversification.

The discussion was part of a technical workshop titled "Getting Urbanization Right in Bangladesh", organised by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) yesterday.

Dr Nora Dihel, senior economist at the World Bank, said Dhaka is generating one-fifth of the GDP right now and almost half of the formal employment of the country.

"That is why the focus should be on

organising secondary cities. We are trying to look at the roles of secondary medium-sized cities in sustaining structural transformation and increasing productivity," said Dr Dihel.

Dr Binayak Sen, director-general of BIDS, said, "So the question arises whether we

ISSUES

- URBAN SPRAWL
- OBSESSIVE FOCUS ON DHAKA
- CONGESTED CAPITAL
- CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- BALANCED URBANISATION
- ROAD CONNECTIVITY
- STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION
- CLIMATE MITIGATION STRATEGIES

foster secondary urban development rather than obsessively focusing on Dhaka and Chattogram."

"Successful urbanisation is crucial for

economic growth and it is important for Bangladesh that urban areas become more productive, supporting more innovation and growth," she added.

The World Bank's senior economist Dr Forhad Shilpi and economist Dr Alejandro Molnar made a keynote presentation showing how congestion in Dhaka has increased over the years and what impact climate change could have in the future with the existing state of urbanisation.

Mentioning that the urbanisation rate will rise to 60 percent in 2050 from the existing 38 percent, Shilpi said, "Another 50 million people will be added to the urban population. Will Dhaka be able to take the load?"

"People are going to move away to higher grounds with the rising sea level. But the strategies on climate mitigation and adaptation will also need to be taken into account alongside the expansion of urbanisation to create a balance," she added.