



Dhaka city experienced severe gridlocks at different points on Thursday. The photo was taken from the road in front of Motijheel Govt Boys' High School in the capital — FE photo

# Dhaka- dev, pop overloa 6.0pc G

MUNIMA SULTANA

Highly Dhaka city-concentrated development and population share cast adverse impact on Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) reducing its growth by 6.0 per cent or more, according to findings revealed Thursday at a BIDS conference.

Such Dhaka-centric growth cities and impacts per-capita paper presented by Ahma Institute of Bangladesh during a conference on 'Development: Dhaka Overall Growth'.

# Dhaka-centric dev, population

Continued from page 1 col. 8

It's also impacting the overall urban development and causing congestion and pollution.

"There are also economic limits to concentration... Cities cannot grow in unlimited way...", he said sharing his paper contents in a second-day session of the conference which he attended virtually.

Former Lead Economist of the World Bank, Mr Ahsan stated the cost of congestion to be 2.0 to 3.0 per cent of GDP as direct effects. The city's growth creates overgrowth of primates, concentrating population and development within a centre of the city.

Overgrowth of primates (the largest city) can undermine the other cities' growth and the cities can overgrow because of market failures arising from lumpy investment-fixed costs and externalities, network effects and circular cumulative causation.

Emphasising corrective policy as political elite prefer growth of primate city, he also said this is not acceptable in growth pole.

Economist Ahsan, also consultant of the United Nations, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation, focused on national, regionally neutral policy and place-based policies, saying that these are integrated issues and must focus on micro-economic management, economic competitiveness, good investment climate, investment infrastructure, connectivity, transport corridors, telecommunications and so.

He said migration, which is highly welfare-enhancing, also has limit even in advanced economies. He shared data of World Development Index that show urban

population share of primate city in Bangladesh is 31.9 per cent, which is 3 per cent in China, 6 per cent in India, 7.4 per cent in Indonesia, 22.6 per cent in Pakistan and 23.2 per cent in Vietnam

He cited another paper by Mohammad Yunus, senior research fellow of BIDS, which shows a gap between east and west part of the country in per-capita consumption by estimating income, poverty and inequality in the two regions.

The economist said the disparities could not narrow the gap between cities, adding that poverty is much more acute in the west districts than in east districts. He cited household income and expenditure survey in which west districts appear to experience more convergence of poverty measures than east districts by one per cent whether it is poverty-headcount rate, poverty gap or squared poverty gap.

The HIES estimates partial elasticity between poverty-reduction rate and growth that vary between - 2.23 to -3.6 per cent across headcount rates, poverty gap and squared poverty gap.

During the second-day session, Azreen Karim presented a paper on risk, poverty or politics: The Determinants of Sub-national Public Spending Allocation for Adaptive Disaster Reduction in Bangladesh, followed by Mohammad Abdul Malek on Rural development in Bangladesh Over Three Decades: Findings from Mahabub Hossain Panel Data and the Way Forward.

During the session on the surviving and thriving of women through major shocks, Victoria Baranove, Laura Zimmermann and Shyamal Chowdhury presented papers.

*smunima@yahoo.com*

# Socioeconomic inequalities widening: Study

## FE REPORT

Despite significant improvement in handling childhood under-nutrition situation over the last one and a half decades, socioeconomic inequalities have long been widening in the country, according to a study.

The improvement in childhood under-nutrition indicates increase in household income. But inequalities still loom large among families in terms of geographical location and among marginalised communities, the study showed.

### Annual BIDS Conference on Development

It also added that apart from increased income, education level of mothers can play the key role in ending malnutrition among children.

The findings were revealed in Session-7 on the second day of the three-day Annual BIDS Conference on Development (ABCD) 2021 at a hotel in the city's Gulshan area on Thursday.

Former Bangladesh Bank (BB) governor Dr Atiur Rahman chaired the session, where findings of three studies were presented.

The studies were - 'Trends and Inequality of Childhood

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Continued to page 7 Col. 5

# Socio-economic inequalities

Continued from page 8 col. 5

Under-nutrition in Bangladesh: A Household Level Analysis (2004-2018)' by Abdur Razzaque Sarker; 'Spatial and Social Dimensions of Poverty: A Multi-dimensional Approach' by S M Zulfiqar Ali; and 'Adolescent Motherhood in Bangladesh: Trends and Determinants' by Mohammad Mainul Islam.

In the first presentation, Mr Sarkar said during the period from 2004 to 2018, the prevalence of childhood stunting, wasting, and underweight declined by 39 per cent, 43 per cent, and 49 per cent respectively.

"We have observed that childhood illness, maternal education, mothers' BMI (body mass index), toilet facilities, and wealth status are the key areas of inequalities in the country."

He recommended prioritising nutrition-specific interventions like micronutrient supplementation, and improved food and nutrient intake during pregnancy for low-income households to reduce malnutrition among children.

In a separate presentation on the

issue of adolescent motherhood in the country, Mr Mainul said the high rate of child marriage, in most cases, leads to adolescent motherhood, which has been declining in the country - but at a slower pace.

Besides, the increased dropout rate of girls from schools during the coronavirus pandemic has made them vulnerable to early marriage, which at the same time may push them to adolescent motherhood.

Terming lower education level one of the key conditions behind child marriage and early motherhood, he added that national and regional policy interventions are required to reduce adolescent motherhood by empowering women through creating income opportunities and providing education.

Commenting on the studies, Dr Atiur said only data do not speak the truth, qualitative analysis of those figures is also required.

He suggested the researchers to accumulate and analyse data in a way that helps people understand the actual scenario.

Meanwhile, findings of three other studies were presented in Session-6 on 'Human Capital and Public Policy'.

Former BB governor Mohammed Farashuddin presided over the session, moderated by Professor of Department of Economics at East West University A K Enamul Haque.

The studies were - 'Student Performance in Online Education in Bangladesh' by Nazmul Hoque, Syed Basher, and A K Enamul Haque; 'Global Value Chains and Public Policy Dilemma in Covid Times: Evidence from Bangladesh' by Abeer Khandker; and 'Impact of Floods on Education Outcomes: Evidence from Bangladesh Using Satellite and Census Data' by Mohammad Mainul Hoque and Kazi Iqbal.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Farashuddin said online education is new for all - students and teachers - as none was prepared for it.

To make online learning interesting, teachers should emphasise developing innovative teaching, questioning and evaluation procedure, he opined.

*ahb\_mcj2009@yahoo.com*