

## **Urbanization and Urban crime in Bangladesh**

**Md. Motiar Rahman**

In the present day world crime and violence are constantly evolving phenomena which are closely linked to the patterns of Urbanization. Large cities in developing countries, and particularly their poorest and most disadvantaged inhabitants, are those most frequently afflicted by urban crime violence. This essay examines some of the key trends in urban growth and crime in metropolitan cities in Bangladesh with a suggestion to invest more and more in the prevention of crime and strengthen the enforcement apparatus.

In the world civilization urbanization is not a new phenomenon. History shows that the modern day urbanization has been closely linked to the Industrialization since urbanization acts as a catalyst to boost industrialization-led economic growth and facilitate transition from agricultural-based income and employment to non-agriculture based livelihood opportunities. Virtually the urbanization impinges upon the whole fabric of the traditional socioeconomic spectrum of a society. It generates a shift in the livelihood pattern of the rural community and often results in migration of the farm laborers to off-farm activities in the cities. Thus urbanization, migration and development are interrelated –linked to the extent that the economic factor is at the heart to urban growth. The distribution of the natural resources, the location of transport routes, the organization of market, the special distribution of power and authority are some of the defining features of urbanization. In simple terms, Urbanization is thus a process in which an increasing number of the entire population lives in or directly or indirectly depends on cities and suburbs of cities.

### **Urbanization in Bangladesh**

Urbanization in Bangladesh has been relegated to the background of historical antiquities. Still then, the country does not have the huge urban settlement to be identified as towns and cities in the modern sense of the term. Rather, until recently, the country was largely rural. In 1961, more than 5% of the population lived in the urban areas. Since the independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced enormously high rate of urbanization which has exceeded more than three times higher than that of the national population growth rate.

### **Urban population in Bangladesh**

Source: UN World urbanization prospect (2007).

Rapid urban settlement is the feature of the contemporary urbanization in Bangladesh. It is estimated that nearly 50 percent of the national urban population are crammed into the four metropolitan cities: Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. All these cities show the increasing number of population in every census. According to World Bank Bangladesh development series-2007, urbanization in Bangladesh has been going up at a higher pace. After independence in 1971, the country's national population growth was 2.2% but the urban population growth was 7% yearly. According to UN population division, almost 35 million i.e. 25% of country's total population is living in urban areas. As the aforementioned figure indicated by the vertical line, this 35 million is expected to exceed 80 million by 2030. In the left side of the figure, it shows total population both rural and urban. The urban population is moving upward as indicated by blue and green lines in the figure.

It is estimated UN population division that by 2015 the urban population would reach 22 million. Dhaka has 35% of the total urban population where together all four cities have 60% (BBS, 2001). Located centrally in the country, Dhaka has been growing at a rate than most other cities in the region large urban agglomerations and huge population approximately 14.65 million people. Dhaka has been incorporated in the global commodity chains of consumer goods, in particular through its garments industry, in which more than two million people work. It thus connects millions of people to the global economic system; a defining feature of mega cities. Link in many other mega cities of the south, global integration was achieved in Dhaka at the cost of growing spatial fragmentation and socio-economic polarization. However Dhaka has never been a planned urban settlement and growing in the most haphazard fashion with attendant problems affecting heavily of the security and service providing apparatus.

The major population of Bangladesh in 2009 (thousand)

City	2009
Dhaka	14648
Chittagong	4961
Khulna	1682

Total population in thousand (2010)

Rural Population	118276
Urban Population	46149
Percentage of urban population	28.1

Source : UN Population Division.

Table shows the population of three major cities of Bangladesh in 2009 and Dhaka city conceived almost three times higher than second largest city Chittagong. According to the Bangladesh's total population, the percentage of urban population is 28.1.

Impact of urbanization

Since the urbanization has impact heavily in the socio-economic milieu of a given society, there are merits and demerits. Some of the positive benefits are higher productivity, better income, and reduction of fertility rate, modernization, people's empowerment, democratic political environment, civic amenities and improved access to information technology. On the other hand, massive degradation in the urban environment congestion, extreme pressure of housing, growth of slums and the pressure of urban services such as education, health, transportation, water, sanitation, electricity, fuel, garbage clearance, recreation etc. While it is true that urbanization generates growth in the economy, it also creates great inequality of income within urban population. Income inequality in urban areas in Bangladesh is higher than in rural areas and even within urban areas it has increase during the last few years. Therefore, urbanization in Bangladesh has been reckoned with the transference of poverty from rural to urban areas. In the urban areas, there is about 37% of the urban population living below national poverty line. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_cite\\_note-7#cite\\_note-7](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/poverty_in_Bangladesh_cite_note-7#cite_note-7) for those living in urban areas, especially the capital Dhaka, and major industrial cities such as Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi, they enjoy a better standard of living, with electricity, gas and clean water supplies. Despite this, living in slums without all amenities of a decent life.

Generally urbanization shows set of indicators such as population density, industrial units, factories and commercial establishments, traffic congestion and migration from rural to urban areas. This rapid urbanization is the integral to some social problems such as floating population, slums, unemployment, drug addiction and violence. The huge number of slums and quarter settlements on the edges of lakes, rivers, sewers and railway tracks are distributed in an irregular manner throughout the city. The adverse surrounding, coupled with a highly dense population, gives rise to a myriad of social, health and environmental problems. The city today has been virtually infested with varieties of crimes and violence, drug trafficking and addiction, organized crime and sexual abuses. Some of these are associated with affluence while the other with deprivation, frustration and bad governance. Now days, the pattern and types of crimes have changed with the shift in the fabric of the society.

In fact, cities are growing rapidly so as to accommodate 50% of the world population by 2025. But urban crime is growing even faster, according to the United Nation Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Balance. A study conducted by the UN International crime and justice research institute (UNICRI) indicates that urban crime has occurred very frequently and it is also hypothesized that more than half of the urban population worldwide have been victimized at least once in the study period 1988-1993. Therefore victimization rates have been considered to be the highest in the large cities. Well known hubs of commerce and culture like Los Angeles, Lagos, Moscow and Rio de Janeiro have eroded the myth as the citadel of human security. Average citizens are no longer living in secured environment; rather the worsening security situation drags them into the unmapped labyrinth of armed attack by unknown belligerents.

Crime and violence affect all members of society, regardless of sex, age, and income but are more evident in urban areas, especially poor and marginalized neighborhoods. It intrudes into homes, schools, commercial establishments, public transport, and sports and other public venues. Fear of crime changes the living of the people. Concern about crime pushes wealthier populations out of city centers into segregated and enclosed private suburbs, creating fortified enclaves for home leisure and work a part from the human suffering inflicted, crime acts as a stumbling block to the development. If the sense of insecurity is all pervasive, corporate investors, international development agencies and local artisans and merchants alike will be reluctant to participate in the sustaining economic activity. If the security of cities cannot be guaranteed, nations shall not be expected move.

Crimes committed during the period from 2008 to 2012 (up to November) Six metropolitan cities in Bangladesh namely DMP (Dhaka metropolitan police), CMP (Chittagong metropolitan police), KMP (Khulna metropolitan police), RMP (Rajshahi metropolitan police), BMP (Barisal metropolitan police), SMP (Sylhet metropolitan police) have been taken for the purpose of this study. However, this will show the trend and levels of crimes in six metropolitan cities. There are some smaller cities especially districts headquarters and some of the sub-districts which may well be taken as smaller urban settlements in the process of urbanization in Bangladesh. Since these metropolitan cities have some form of special law enforcement apparatus known as metropolitan police, I presume that they would act as a precursor for the analysis and help in making a co-relation between crime and urbanization in Bangladesh. I have deliberately chosen crimes against property and human body as the data for this essay. This will show the magnitude and frequency of during this period, a total number of crimes lodged with the police in six metropolitan police were 164953. Of these, DMP has the highest number of crimes recorded. DMP shares 70.48%, CMP 12.45%, KMP 05%, RMP 04.32%, BMP 03.28 and SMP 05% of total crimes recorded

during this period. On the other hand, these six metropolitan police experienced a sizable number of crimes recorded throughout the country. During this period, police recorded as much as 6, 52,505 crimes throughout the country whereas all metropolitan police registered total 164953 crimes. The percentage of crime recorded by metropolitan police if we compare with the national crime figure is 25.27%. This demonstrates that one-fourth of the total crimes recorded in Bangladesh occurred in these metropolitan cities.

Pattern of crimes differs from metropolitan to metropolitan. Among the most commonly reported crime and violence are toll collection, robbery and dacoity, mastan-induced violence, drug addiction, land grabbing and violence, violence against women and children, illegal possession and use of fire arms, illicit trafficking in women and children, murder and kidnapping. Some serious crimes like hijacking and bomb throwing have all added a new dimension to the problems of criminal administration. The drug addiction is often linked to crime to crime and violence.

Mastani (Activities of musclemen end hoodlum) are thugs committing a wide range of crimes such as taking meals in restaurants without payment, forcible extraction of tolls and subscriptions, particularly from house owner, tenant, shop owners, businessmen, contractors etc., bus stands, real estate companies, owners of industries and clinics etc. Mastan gives also mercenary service such as kidnapping for ransom, grabbing of property, murder, dacoity etc. In exchange of cash or kind from anybody. Some of them have made fortune by grabbing real estate property, shops, buses and trucks. During this heyday, they extort huge amount of money from businessmen, contractors and others that no one dare to oppose it or to lodge complaint with the law enforcement authority for fear of retaliation. There have been occasional violent clashes among the mastans over the control of the area of in-fight among themselves over the share of booty or exert their power and position. Special laws like public safety Act, Speedy Trail Act were made to combat crimes committed by mastan.

In the context of public perception of the security in cities, crime against property such as robbery, dacoity, Mugging, bomb throwing, mastani induced toll collection secretly, armed violence and murder shall be the most common crimes of concern. The second highest is the violence against women. The next is the dispute over land property such as land grabbing, dispossession of land and forceful eviction from house. Lastly drug abuse and drug related offence have been the cause of insecurity. However, the sense of insecurity has not been so all pervasive in all these urban settlements. Still then, the law enforcement apparatus requires constant monitoring, cautious supervision and frequent intervention to make it a secured human habitation. Finally it is arguable that crimes in urban setting are occurring more frequently than the pace urbanization is running in Bangladesh. Therefore, the society shall have to consider as an investment to strengthen the security apparatus for the better future the country.

**Reference:**

1. Brown, Vanda Felbab (2011) Bringing the state to the slum: confronting organized crime and urban violence in Latin America, lessons for law enforcement and policymakers. Canada.
2. Moser, Caroline (2007) urban violence and insecurity: An introductory roadmap. London
3. Shaw, Margaret ET el (2007) strategies and best practices in crime prevention in particular in relation to urban areas and youth at risk, proceeding of the workshop held at the 11<sup>th</sup> UN congress on crime prevention and criminal justice, Montreal.
4. World Bank Bangladesh Development series 2007.
5. UN world urbanization prospect (2007).

6. Siddiqui Kamal et el (2000) Overcoming the government crisis in Dhaka city: The University press Limited, Dhaka.
7. .... (1990) social formation in Dhaka city, a study in the third world urban sociology, The University press Limited, Dhaka.
8. Shafi, Salma A (2010) Urban crime and violence in Dhaka, UPL, Dhaka.
9. Majumder, pratima paul et el (1996), The squatters of Dhaka city, Dynamism in the life of Agargaon squatters, UPL, Dhaka.
10. Ahmed Sadiq et el (2007), making Dhaka livable, UPL, Dhaka.

**Writer**

Deputy Inspector General, Bangladesh police  
Police headquarters, Dhaka.